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Vol. I

## Billy the Bootblack.

By the Authors of "Around the World," "Humpty Dumpty Dick," etc., etc., etc.





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# BILLY, THE BOOTBLACK;

OR,

## The Trump Card Last.

By HARRIGAN & HART,

Authors of "Tim Malone and His Mule," "Paddy from Cork; or, Erin Go Bragh," "Humpty Dumpty Dick; or, The Harlequin Detective," "Around the World in Eighty Days," etc., etc., etc.

### CHAPTER I.

#### BILLY AT WORK.

"HERE you are! shine 'em up, mister?"  
 "Shine 'em, only five cents."  
 "Shine 'em, sir? Give it to 'em red hot for a fivepence—shine 'em?"

This scene was on the corner of Beekman and Nassau streets.

Billy, the bootblack, and three or four of his companions were stationed there, soliciting jobs off the passers-by.

A countryman came along, and in an instant the boys surrounded him.

"Here you are, right here," said Billy, placing his box in front of the stranger; "put a nice shine on 'em for five cents."

The countryman hesitated. To hesitate under such circumstances is to be lost.

"Say, mister, make them cowhides look like patent leather—here you are."

"What's the matter with you, boy?" asked greeny, setting down his huge bag and looking at Billy.

"Just got in town, mister?"

"Yes—why?"

"Ever been in the city afore?"

"No—why?"

"Why, then you arn't posted?"

"What's the matter?"

"Can't go over on Broadway wid dem," said Billy, pointing to the countryman's rough boots.

"Why not?"

"'Gainst the law; get 'rested sure."

"Git out!" exclaimed the victim, striking an attitude of astonishment.

"Fact. Got to have 'em blackened. Put your foot right up here an' I'll fix 'em right away."

"Good gracious! I thought this 'ere was a free country," muttered the Long Islander; "but go ahead, boy; I want tew go all straight."

"All right, here you go," said Billy, commencing on one of the huge cowhides.

When our hero had got through with him it was hard to say that there was any improvement in his looks, for although his boots shone like a newly polished stove, yet his butternut-colored pants, about two inches too short, contrasted strangely enough to excite laughter from all who passed him.

Billy and his companions enjoyed it hugely.

First one and then another of the industrious group obtained a job, and a running fire of jokes and good things was kept up, and the little fellows enjoyed themselves as only boys can, but generally at the expense of those whom they solicited for patronage.

Presently a Jerseyman from the far interior of the State, came along wonderingly.

"Shine 'em up, mister?" asked Billy, cheerfully.

"What?" he asked, in surprise.

"Shine up yer gun-boats; do it for tenpence."

"No. Whar's Ann street?"

"Ann street? Why, it's about five miles from here. Better have 'em shined up afore you go."

"You git out."

"'Gainst the law for strangers to go 'round

New York without their boots blacked," suggested Billy, calmly.

"You go ter thunder," said he, starting to go.

"Hold on, Josiah," said Micky Shay.

"Who said my name's Josiah?" said the irate son of Jersey, turning savagely upon the boy.

"This chap here said as how he used ter know you in New Jersey. But it's all right; I'll black yer boots for five cents."

"Will you, though?"

"Sure pop. Lift 'em up here," said he, placing his box before the man.

"Git out," growled several of the boys.

"I'll clean the Jersey mud all off an' give yer a shine yer can see yer face in, for fivepence."

"You go 'way, Micky; you can't afford it. Why, it will take a whole box of blacking to go over them dug-outs," suggested Billy, laughingly.

"Oh, you be gol darned," replied the Jerseyman, placing one of his big feet on Micky's box.

"Oh, you be blowed," replied Billy, turning away. "Here you are, customer, first chance."

said he, as one of his frequent patrons approached. The man was a wealthy broker on Nassau street, now on his way home.

"Well, all right, young fellow. Get over those moccasins as rapidly as possible, for I must reach the cars," replied the broker.

"I'm yer Kitty-did, customer," replied Billy, getting down to his work at once. "Want yer baggage carried?" he asked a moment afterwards.

"Who will carry it?"

"Why Tommy'll carry it while I'm shinin' 'em up."

"But is he honest?"

"Honest! Why he's my pard, he is, an' that settles it. I'm responsible for Tommy Mack every time."

"All right. Let him take it to the Jersey City ferry and wait until I get there."

"Hunky do, customer. Here Tommy, git away wid this bag?"

"Where to?" asked little Tommy, coming up.

"Jersey City ferry, foot of Cortlandt street. Mind now, he's a customer, so mind dat dere arn't nuffin crooked, see?"

"All right, old pard," said the little fellow, lifting the bag to his shoulder, and starting away.

"How is business, Billy?"

"Well, pretty good, seein' it's hard times," replied our hero, putting one of his fancy touches upon the gentleman's boot.

"What is your other name, Billy?"

"My odder name?" he asked, looking up in surprise.

"Yes. It is Billy—Billy what?"

"I give it up," replied he, tapping the sole of the boot to indicate that he had finished it.

"What! Haven't you any other name but Billy?"

"Yes; Billy, the boot-black; that's me, customer."

"Oh, you are joking now. Of course you have some other name. Where do you live?"

"At the Newsboy's Lodging House mostly."

"Where are your parents?"

"Give it up again, customer," replied Billy.

"Well, that is strange. So you are a waif, then?"

"A what?" asked the boy, with some spirit.

"Why, a waif; a boy without parents' or relations."

"Yes; but that's all right, boss; that don't prevent me giving good shines."

"Ha! ha! ha! You are right, my boy, and a philosopher as well. Here, here is half a dollar for you and Tommy," said he, handing him a bill, and turning away.

"Where have I seen that boy's face?" he muttered to himself.

Billy was silent for a few moments after the gentleman had gone. The question never had been asked him before, who he was. He had always been called "Billy, the bootblack," and he never stopped to think about the possibility of his having a surname.

He blackened the boots of several others while engaged in the sober problems of who he was, and presently night came on and the boys who congregate in the neighborhood began to struggle homeward, if homes they had, and if not, to such places as they could find to sleep in.

"What's der matter wid yer, Billy? somebody bust yer in de snoot?" asked Tommy Mack, noticing how sober his friend looked.

"I guess so not much. Why?" asked Billy.

"'Cause you look so glum-like. Brace up!"

"Well, I don't feel much bully, Tommy," replied Billy, carelessly.

"Let's go to de Grand Duke Theater to-night."

"No."

"Corkin' ole bill."

"No. Guess I'll go to de Comique to-night."

"Bah! yer gettin' dreadful aristocratic now-a-days, Billy. But, all right. Whack up an' I'm off for some coffee an' cakes," he added, briskly.

"Well, here you are; just twelve shillings apiece to-day; biz is awful dull," said he, giving Tommy his share of the day's income.

"Good enough! I say how much yer made ter-day, old Dictionary?" asked Tommy, speaking to Frank Birch, another of the craft who came up at that moment.

Frank was about fifteen years of age, a great imitator of others, and much given to using big words of which he knew nothing, but he would fire them in on every occasion, and hence his sobriquet of "Dictionary." But he was a bright, smart little fellow, and next to Billy a great favorite with everybody.

"How much, dear Thomas? Well, a century of eagles."

"What! talk United States," said Tommy, with disgust.

"Say a hundred pennies; a dollar."

"We lays over you—twelve shillin' apiece!"

"Very muckleberrious," suggested Frank, soberly.

"Oh, you go shoot yerself! I'm off; Grand Duke ter-night, you bet; coffee an' cakes, hi yah," and away he went as merry as a lark.

"And I'm going to the Bowery to hear Ned Eddy," said Frank, turning away.

Billy was left alone. There was no more customers and he began to think about going as his friends had gone, but as he slung his box over his shoulder preparatory he heard the voice of Tilly



O'Neal, the girl selling evening papers on the opposite corner, and he stopped.

There was a mournful tone in her voice which convinced Billy, as it frequently did passers-by, that she had not yet sold out her stock in trade, and that the prospect for doing so was not very encouraging.

"Poor Tilly, she's stuck again," he mused. "I guess I'll go over and help her out."

Tilly O'Neal was a beautiful child of poverty, about thirteen years of age and her mother's only support.

"Hello, Tilly. Stuck?"

"Yes, Billy, bad," she replied, half cheerfully and half sorrowfully.

"How many?"

"Ten *Newses*, five *Mails*, three *Commercials*."

"What's de matter?"

"No news I guess."

"Then why don't you make some?"

"How?"

"Why, yell out 'Great murder,' 'Steamship lost,' or something like that."

"Oh, I haven't the cheek for that, Billy. Besides, it would hurt my trade; my customers would go back on me for fooling 'em."

"Fudge, Tilly. We fellows must have a living somehow, an' I don't think it's any worse for us to cry fraud news than it is for dem coves on Wall street; besides, your regular customers have all gone home by this time, and the chaps as is going along now is late duffers and chaps as stop in gin mills on their way home—and it's fun to fool them. Let me have yer *Mails* and *Commercials*," said he, earnestly.

"Keep your eye on my box," and away he went, and swung himself aboard of a passing car.

In the course of twenty minutes he returned empty-handed and gave the money to Tilly.

"Why, how did you do it, Billy?" she asked, in great surprise.

"Why making news. See here," said he, taking a portion of her remaining papers.

Turning to some passers by, he said— "Here's your news extra; terrible riot in Philadelphia: a whole block burned and fifty people killed."

"Why, Billy!" exclaimed Tilly softly.

In five minutes the papers were all sold, and as it had become too dark to read on the streets, the purchasers put them in their pockets to read them at home, while Billy again slung his blacking-box over his shoulder and stood ready to go.

"Come, Tilly, going?" he asked.

"Yes, and your just a jolly good boy for helping me out with my papers," she said, walking briskly alongside of him.

"Oh, that's all right, Tilly; that's because I like you," said he, taking her hand as they walked along.

"Do you, though?" she asked, looking up earnestly into his handsome face.

"Of course I do. Wish I was rich, I wouldn't let you sell papers. What do you think one of my customers asked me a little while ago?" he said, turning the subject.

"I am sure I don't know—what?"

"He asked me if I had any other name than Billy," said he, with a kind of forced laugh.

"Well, haven't you?"

"Hanged if I know—I wish I did."

"Can't you find out?"

"How? No, I never knew anything about my father or mother—well, well, that be hanged. One name is enough for a poor chap, any way."

"But you may not always be poor, Billy," she said, with much childish sympathy in her voice.

"Well, if you wish it, I'll buy another name; a high, big-sounding one."

Tilly was silent, and it would have been evident to an observer that Billy thought more seriously on the subject than he pretended to.

"Wouldn't you like to go to the theater, Tilly?"

"Oh, wouldn't I though. But how can I?"

"Would your mother let you go with me?"

"I don't know; but I guess so," she said, shyly.

"Then come and have some supper wid me and we'll go and see her."

This was agreed to with childish delight, and the two entered a cheap eating-house and partook of a plain but substantial supper, after which they went to a humble tenement on Center street, where Tilly O'Neal and her mother lived.

## CHAPTER II.

### BILLY MEETS WITH A VERY STRANGE ADVENTURE.

BILLY and Tilly O'Neal went to the theater that night, and for the time being forgot their troubles.

To Tilly, who had never been to such a place before, it opened up a new world, and her girlish nature ran almost wild over it.

As they parted afterwards at her mother's door, he said:

"It's all right, Tilly; we'll go again sometime,

but don't tell the boys: they'd chaff us about it and say we're spooney."

She promised; but young as she was, this curious admonition awakened strange feelings in her heart, and she never forgot it.

The next day Billy was early at his post. He had several regular customers in the neighboring offices, but it was too soon yet to find them in, and so he divided his time between the customers he could find for morning papers and those who wished his shoe-brush.

While thus occupied Mr. William Barnwell, a broker, the same man who had patronized Billy and his partner the night before, came slowly down on the opposite side of the street and stopped on the corner.

Without seeming to do so, he was watching our hero closely, with his brow contracted and his hat well down over his eyes, as though wishing to see without being seen.

But the keen eyes of Billy, the bootblack, allowed nothing to pass unnoticed. Recognizing a customer, he seized his box and darted across the street toward where he was standing.

Mr. Barnwell saw at a glance that he had been discovered and started to go.

But Billy was almost instantly at his side.

"Black 'em, customer?"

"No—that is, not here; come to my office."

"All right, sir. Close by?"

"Only a few steps," said the broker, moving on.

Billy followed after him. In a short time they entered a handsome building on Nassau street, and Mr. Barnwell led the way into a luxuriant office on the second floor.

Throwing aside his hat, coat and gloves, he seated himself on a chair without speaking a word, and Billy knelt before him with his blacking box.

There was a strange look on the broker's face as he sat there, so unlike the cheerful, half-dashing style that he wore when we first saw him. He regarded Billy for some moments without speaking a word, and not until the boots had been cleaned and he was paying him did he speak:

"So you don't know any other name but Billy the bootblack, do you?"

"No, sir. Wish I did. It's kinder rough on a chap not to know who he is, arn't it?" he asked, looking up at the man with rather a sad smile.

"Well, sometimes it is better than it is to know who you are," said Barnwell.

"That's so. There was Mike McCarthy; he didn't know who his dad was until he was thirteen years old, and then he found him up at Sing Sing."

"In that case he had better never have found him."

"Maybe, boss, but I wouldn't mind finding my dad, even if he was in prison."

"Is that so?" asked Barnwell, quickly. "How old are you?"

Billy gazed out of the window a moment before making a reply.

"Fifteen, sir."

"How do you know?"

"Well, a horse-jockey looked in my mouth once and aged me," replied Billy, laughing.

A look, half smile and half frown, overspread the face of Mr. Barnwell for an instant.

"Where have you always lived?"

"Here in New York. The first I remember I was being kept by an old woman down on Cherry street."

"What was her name?"

"Mrs. Mahoney, a poor widow."

"Where is she now?"

"She's dead, sir, these six or seven years."

"Dead," mused Barnwell. "Well, where have you lived since then?"

"The Five Points Mission took care of me after she died and sent me to school. But I got tired of that and run away. Now I sleep at the News-boys' Lodging House most of the time and get my grub in hash-mills. That's the sort of a fish-bait I am now. Shall I come here and blacken 'em every day?" he asked, suddenly changing the subject.

"Yes. Come here at three o'clock. I want you to do an errand for me."

"All right, sir, that's me; anything for stamps," he replied, shouldering his box and going out.

The moment he had gone Mr. Barnwell went into his private office and closed the door behind him. He seated himself, and for a long time seemed lost in thought. Presently he got up, and returning to the front office he went to the safe, and unlocking a private drawer he pulled it out, and retired with it to his seclusion again.

This time he locked the door behind. Taking from the drawer several closely-sealed packages he glanced at the memorandum of their contents, and finally produced a small paper box; opening this he took out an ambrotype likeness

of a handsome young lady, and gazed upon it with evidences of emotion for some minutes.

Then he lay back in his easy-chair, closed his eyes, and seemed to be hitching together the lost and broken links of a chain, tasking his memory for those that were lost, and using his ingenuity to repair those that were broken.

After looking over several papers he appeared to have satisfied himself on the subject, and again placing them back in the drawer, he locked it into its place in the safe and returned the key to his pocket.

His clerks noticed that he wore an uncommonly severe look during the remainder of the day, and answered questions that were put to him in a curt and unnatural way.

At three o'clock punctually, Billy presented himself. At the same time a man of a dark and forbidding aspect came from Mr. Barnwell's private office, and casting a look at Billy, left the place.

Mr. Barnwell stepped to the door and beckoned Billy to enter, which he quickly did, after which he closed the door and they were alone.

"I think you are an honest boy, Billy," said Barnwell, taking a seat and motioning Billy to do the same.

"Yes, sir, I guess I'm square," he replied, modestly.

"And smart, too."

"Well, I can take my own part; sell newspapers, and black boots pretty good."

"And I guess you can do more than that. Now, I want you to do a little business for me and I will pay you well for it."

"All right, sir."

"Take this letter to Mr. Ponsby, No. 39 Ann street, wait for an answer, and then follow the instructions he may give you."

"All right, sir," said Billy, taking the letter.

"What floor is he on?"

"The first; you can't help finding him."

"All right, sir."

"It may take you some time to do the whole errand so you can report to me to-morrow."

"Yes, sir."

"Now be careful, for it is important business that I have entrusted you with, and if you do it all right it may lead you into something better than blacking boots."

"All right, sir; I'll do it," said Billy, putting on his cap and going from the room.

Barnwell listened to the boy's receding footsteps, while a most fiendish smile overspread his features.

"I trust you *may*, my lad," said he to himself.

Putting on his coat and hat he soon after left his office for home.

Billy wended his way cheerfully along until he came to the number on Ann street. A man, the same one that had left Barnwell's office a few moments before, stood in the hallway.

"Who do you want to find, Johnny?" he asked.

"Mr. Ponsby."

"Ah! I am your man. I was waiting for you. You come from Mr. Barnwell?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, that's all right."

Billy gave him the letter. The man opened and read it.

"Yes, yes, I see. He says here that you will do any errand for me that I may wish."

"Yes, sir."

"Wait here a moment," said the man, turning and ascending the narrow stairs.

Billy amused himself during the next five minutes by chaffing an Irishman who owned a hand-cart near by and was canvassing for jobs.

At the end of that time Mr. Ponsby came down stairs and handed him a letter directed to Miss Arch at a number on Broome street.

"Deliver that and receive further instructions from the lady," said Ponsby.

"All right, boss," replied Billy, starting off.

Arriving at the designated number he rang the bell and was shown into a parlor on the second floor. A beautiful brunette lady received him and read the letter he brought her.

"Wait here a moment," she said at length, going from the room.

"How high is this?" he asked himself, as he gazed around on the well-furnished apartment.

"But, arn't she a gay one," he mused, thinking of the woman who had just left him. "But I'll bet that Tilly will be handsomer when she grows up," he added.

In a few minutes the woman returned and gave him a letter, directed to Jack Lysle, at a number on the Bowery. She also gave him a small box to deliver to the said Lysle, with instructions to answer no questions and to deliver it to no one but the party to whom it was directed.

Billy started away to do the errand, and had gone as far as Elizabeth street, when a hand was laid roughly on his shoulder which brought him to a sudden halt.



"Here, young fellow, I want you," said a gruff voice, and turning, Billy found himself face to face with a tall, powerful man.

"An' I want myself," replied Billy, looking upon the affair as a joke of some kind.

"You must go with me."

"What for?"

"You'll find out what for, you young Jack Sheppard."

"Go 'way wid yer coddin'; I'm no Jack Sheppard."

"Well, we'll see about that—come along."

"Who are you?" demanded Billy.

The man turned up the lapel of his coat and displayed a shield.

"Cop?"

"Right—come on," replied the man, taking him by the collar.

"What's the matter wid you? Leave me alone."

"Come on, or I shall hurt you," replied the officer.

"But I haven't done nothing."

"Come along. No chin music."

Reluctantly and wondering he accompanied the officer to the station-house.

Standing before the sergeant's desk was a well-dressed woman. The moment Billy was brought up she exclaimed:

"Ah, that is the rascal."

"Sure?" asked the sergeant.

"Positive."

"Search him, Dibk," said the sergeant.

"What's this hurrah all about?" asked Billy.

"We'll inform you presently."

The detectives went through Billy's pockets, and produced the letter and the small box.

"That's the box," said the woman.

"Describe what's in it?" said the sergeant, taking possession of it.

"One gold watch and chain, watch numbered 11,475, chain solid, eighteen carat gold, links and balls. There is also a set of diamond ear-rings in the box, on the cover of which is written my name, 'Martha Gooding.'"

"Where were the articles?"

"In the parlor of my house, No. 99 Broome street. This fellow came there with a letter for a lady who has lately been stopping with me, and he was left alone in the room while she went into the next room for something, and directly he had gone I missed the box."

"The contents are as you describe them," said the sergeant, looking at them.

"This is a snap," said Billy.

"Yes, you'll find a snap before you get through with it, my clever fellow."

"I didn't steal that box; the woman gave it to me to take with the letter."

"What letter? Let's see it, said the sergeant, taking it up. "Jack Lysle. He's a pretty man. Is he your instructor?"

"I tell you I don't know anything about him. I was told to take the letter and the box to him."

"Exceedingly thin, young fellow."

"I am sure he lies, for the lady is an utter stranger in the city, and has only recently arrived from Havana," replied the woman.

"Let's read the letter," said the sergeant.

"DEAR JACK.—This is Bill, a sharp little cuss, a regular nimble-finger. He will make you a good pal, for he has already done some crack work."

BOB."

"Oh, it's all right, Billy; you have been nipped; that's all. Take him down-stairs—stop! what is your name?"

"Billy, the Bootblack."

"No other name?"

"Not as I knows of."

"Where were you born?"

"New York, I guess."

"Read or write?"

"Yes."

"That's all. Take him down," replied the sergeant, waving the officer to the cells.

When he had finished writing Billy's pedigree in the blotter he turned to the woman.

"Be at the Tombs in the morning by nine o'clock, and state your case to the judge."

"Yes, sir; but my jewelry."

"That will be sent there and given you."

Drawing her veil down over her face she left the station-house.

It was now dark, and it seemed doubly so in the narrow cell in which Billy was placed. At first he was completely stunned. He could not for the life of him comprehend what it all meant. That it was either a mistake or a "job," he felt certain; but how could it have come about?

He dwelt on the subject for a long time, but nothing that he could think of in connection with it offered any solution to the mystery.

In the meantime one by one the cells were being filled with drunkards, thieves, and the scum of the streets. Their curses and howlings were new to Billy, for although he had seen much of

the lower order of city life, yet he had never before been in such a place, much less a prisoner.

But tired nature soon overmastered him, and he slept, a wild, uneasy sleep.

The next morning he was awakened rudely by the doorman of the station, and soon after taken in the prison van, in company with a dozen others, to the Tombs, where he was placed in the prison pen.

Even then he felt as though he was laboring in a dream, and believed that the mistake would be discovered, and that he would be liberated. But it was a false hope.

The police justice arrived and took his seat. One by one the prisoners of the various precincts embraced in this district were called up, examined and sentenced, and finally he was placed at the bar.

The woman who had caused his arrest was there and told her story. The letter was read, the stolen articles sworn to, and in the space of five minutes poor Billy was tried and sentenced to a year's imprisonment on Blackwell's Island.

Even then he could not comprehend the fact. All the while he had believed himself the victim of a mistake which would be discovered and rectified, but no one appeared for him, and the prospect of a year's imprisonment seemed altogether too good to be true.

"Judge, this is a fraud," said he, as he was being removed.

"And so are you," replied the judge, with a frown.

"This job has got a bottom to it."

"Well, you'll find it."

"You bet I will, old man."

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE MYSTERY DEEPENS.

IN an hour or so the court finished its business and adjourned, after which the prison van drove to the door, and those who had been sentenced for long and short terms were hurried in, and a start made for the ferry which crosses from the foot of East Twenty-eighth street to Blackwell's Island.

Our hero, Billy the bootblack, was placed in that gloomy vehicle with the rest. Hope had not entirely forsaken him up to that moment. Those who read the preceding chapter understand a portion of the mystery by which he was surrounded, but as yet they cannot understand the causes which produced the strange combination of circumstances any better than he did.

Innocent of all crime, taken a prisoner while simply doing an errand for Mr. Barnwell, a bad case made out against him, tried, sentenced, and now on the point of being taken away to prison, without a friend to speak to or a generous hand to press.

The affair had up to this point seemed to him to be only a mistake, but now, when he came out to take that dreaded ride to Blackwell's Island, and looked anxiously around in the hope of seeing some friendly face without being able to do so, then it began to assume the shape of a terrible mystery.

All the way down to the boat he tried to think what it could all mean. Who was he but a poor bootblack, and who was it that had an interest in throwing him into prison?

He tried to think if he had an enemy in the world, but he could remember none. But yet there must be an enemy at work. Had it been a mistake, as he at first supposed, it would surely have been found out and rectified before this.

The longer he dwelt upon the subject the more firmly he became convinced that he had been made a victim of by some designing enemy. He could only find a single comfort: he had no parents or relations to be disgraced by the affair.

But even this was offset by thoughts of Tilly O'Neal. What would she say? would she believe him innocent, provided nothing came about to prove him so to the world?

Boy as he was, this thought gave him great pain. The beautiful auburn-haired news-girl had been much in his mind of late, but now the prospect was that he would lose her as well as his liberty.

Tears came into his eyes for a moment, and then he repressed them with a firm set mouth, clenched hands, and a resolution to be avenged if he could only find out who had gotten him into this trap.

The other passengers in the "Black Maria" observed him, and, hardened though they were, the most of them, they could but sympathize with handsome Billy, who seemed to take it so much to heart.

"That's right, Johnnie," said a rough man who sat opposite, and who had noticed the sudden change that came over his features from sadness to determination.

Billy looked at him without making a reply.

"That's right, brace up, young feller, time you've been over the rope 's many a times 's I have, you'll take it easier."

"What you goin' up for, young chap?" asked a faded woman, who sat next to him.

"For nothing," said Billy.

"Me to," replied the woman.

"Oh, yes: we're all going up for nothing," said a flashily dressed young fellow, who was going up for attempting to pick a pocket belonging to somebody else.

A faint laugh greeted his observation.

"What's your name?" asked another.

"Billy."

"Billy what?"

"Yes, Billy what," said he turning away.

In fact he felt very little like conversing with everybody, more especially the bad lot with whom he was now confined.

In due time the van reached the ferry and was taken over to the Island. The prisoners were taken to the keeper's office where their pedigree was taken, together with the personal description of each, after which their several trades were entered against their names.

None in this batch had a trade, with the exception of Billy, and the keeper at once detailed him for service at blacking the boots of the officers and visitors. This was better than it might have been, for it gave him the run of the offices and grounds and did not keep him constantly employed, although he was obliged to wear the hated uniform and be locked in a cell every night like other prisoners.

It took several days for him to recover from the blow enough to reason with himself regarding his future. But during all the time Tilly O'Neal was uppermost in his thoughts. What would the poor little beauty do for a friend now? Then the thought that some other fellow might become a friend to her nearly drove him wild.

Finally he wrote to her the following letter, dating it at New York, resolving never to let her know, if possible, the disgrace which had overtaken him:

"DEAR TILLY,—You must not be surprised at my absence, I have given up blacking boots and hope to be able to help you by-and-by. Don't say a word to any of the boys about me, and I will surprise you before long. Don't you think so much of any other fellow as you do me, will you, Tilly? for that would make me feel very bad. I will write to you as often as I can, and when you learn to write I will tell you where to write to me. Remember me, won't you, Tilly? for you know I think ever so much of you. I will send this by a man and you can get your mother to read it to you, but don't show it to anybody else, will you? Good-bye."

"BILLY."

The letter was written very well, indeed, for a boy who had only enjoyed such advantages of education as he had; although the penmanship might have been improved, still it was very readable.

He had been on the Island only a short time before he made many friends among the officers, for he was just that kind of a fellow. He made friends wherever he went.

So he got one of the officers who was going to the city to take the letter and deliver it to the little news-stand on the corner of Beekman and Nassau streets, and he did so without betraying him.

She was greatly surprised at receiving a letter, and carried it two or three days in her pocket without opening it. But finally she showed it to her mother, who opened and read it, first to herself, and then aloud.

Tilly was delighted, and her little heart fluttered wildly as she coaxed her mother to read it again. Then she resolved to learn to write so that she could correspond with him, and her mother was far from being sorry that something had happened to give her an interest in learning.

She knew how to read, but being naturally wild when not at work, and feeling, young as she was, that learning would not assist her in her humble way of getting a living for herself and her poor crippled mother, she had never taken any interest in such matters, and had grown almost to womanhood without caring for anything but helping her mother.

But now a new life seemed open to her, and from that night she allowed nothing to prevent her from making some improvement every day. And the effect was very soon manifest. The wild, romping girl gradually became tame and thoughtful; more tidy in her dress and choice of her associates. Her customers noticed it and showered more patronage upon her, until she was enabled to extend her business and to earn a good living with less labor.

There are doubtless hundreds who remember



sweet Tilly and the sudden change which came over her.

## CHAPTER IV.

## AND STILL THE MYSTERY IS CONTINUED.

WILLIAM BARNWELL sat in his luxuriant office. It was the next day after the arrest of Billy, the Bootblack.

He seemed gloomy and impatient.

Presently the door leading into the outside office was opened and Mr. Tom Ponsby entered.

"Is Mr. Barnwell in?" he asked of one of the clerks.

"I will see. What name?"

"Wilkins," replied Ponsby.

The clerk rapped at the door of the private office and then walked in.

"Mr. Wilkins."

"Certainly. Show him in," replied Barnwell. Ponsby was admitted.

"Well?"

"I wish to borrow five hundred dollars, Mr. Barnwell," said Ponsby, smiling and taking a seat.

"Certainly," replied the broker, opening his check book. "Pay to order?"

"No; to bearer, if you please."

"By the way, I sent a boy to you yesterday with a letter and he has not yet returned," said Barnwell, as he finished writing.

"Well, he came to me all straight; I gave him a letter to a lady on Broome street; he took it there, and while waiting for an answer stole some jewelry, was followed and arrested, and this morning was sent to Blackwell's Island for one year," replied Ponsby, with a forced look of wonder that such things could be.

"You don't tell me so! The little rascal. Well, well, what should I have expected from an Arab of the streets?"

"I am surprised that you should employ such a boy," said Ponsby, quite loud, evidently that the clerks in the outer office might hear.

"Well, he seemed a bright little fellow and I thought I would help him along. But it serves me right."

"Indeed it does."

"Taken to the Island, eh?" he mused. "Are you acquainted with any of the officers there?"

"Oh, yes, several of them."

"Are the prisoners' friends allowed to take any delicacies in the shape of food to the—"

"Oh, yes, anything but liquors."

"Well, now, maybe that boy isn't so bad after all. Suppose you send something in the shape of fruit to him."

"Prepared fruit?"

"Yes, something that will make him forget his troubles and think he is not entirely deserted."

"I understand. But fruit may not agree with him," said Ponsby, with a hard smile.

"Oh, well, if it does not it is not our fault. We shall have the supreme satisfaction of knowing that we have discharged a Christian duty."

"True. I will see that somebody sends him some prepared fruit," replied Ponsby.

"And if you should ever require another loan of five hundred dollars or so, just call on me."

"Oh, certainly."

Mr. Barnwell handed him the check without looking in his face, and Ponsby also took it without looking up or giving any note or memorandum for it.

It was a strange transaction.

Perhaps this would be a good time to give a pen-picture of William Barnwell and Tom Ponsby.

William Barnwell was about fifty years of age, tall, fine-looking and extremely genteel in his personal appearance. When about business he was calm, cool, sedate, sharp, and bland. When away from business and out on the road with his fast-stepping horses, he had fully all the appearance and spirit of a thorough sporting man, and as such he was regarded by those with whom he came in contact.

He was reputed to be very wealthy, owning one of the most beautiful residences in the State of New Jersey, an hour's ride from New York. Nothing was known of his history previous to his coming to New York, and but little of it since. He was one of those persons who could successfully envelope himself in a mantle of respectability and as successfully ward off all inquiries regarding both past and present. He was a member of one of the aristocratic clubs in New York, and spent his money like a lord, and that was really all that was known about him.

Tom Ponsby was a renegade Jew. Whether that was his real name or not was never known. He professed to be a speculator, but on more than one occasion it had been proven that he would receive stolen goods or do almost anything else for money. He was about forty years of age,

black as a Cuban, slightly built, with jet black hair and little receding eyes and a very prominent nose.

Once or twice the police had overhauled him, but with the aid of money he had escaped and continued to pass for a legitimate speculator among those who did not know him. Those who dealt with him found him close-mouthed, keen, satisfied with whatever was agreed upon, and never known to blackmail on the secrets he possessed, however valued they might have been. For twenty years he had held his head up, and during that time, by ways that were dark it must be confessed, he had amassed a fortune and hoarded it away.

During the past ten years he had often served Mr. Barnwell. The two understood each other in all respects, and could concoct the most villainous piece of business without hardly mentioning it. In fact, a detective might have listened to their conversation while planning a deep scheme of mischief without ever suspecting that anything wrong was afoot.

Such are two of the characters who are to figure in our story, and when it is known that they each had their agents and accomplices, selected on account of their dark and secretive qualities, it can be readily seen what a powerful combination they formed for evil. Silently, calmly, without leaving a track behind, were they enabled to operate in all directions without ever being suspected of wrong intent or deed.

But the question may be asked: "What has this to do with Billy, the Bootblack?" We shall see.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE DYING MANIAC.

As time passed on, Billy the Bootblack became a general favorite on the island, both with the officers and the prisoners with whom he was allowed to associate. He was young, and it took but little to make him forget his troubles. His spirits were naturally buoyant, and, even with a convict's dress on, he was so susceptible to kindness that when it was showered upon him, as it was there, it required nothing more to make him contented.

But when night came, and he was locked with other prisoners into his close and gloomy cell, then he fretted, and chafed, and wished for liberty.

His rounds had now extended from the Penitentiary to the Insane Hospital, and the officers of the various other departments looked for and hailed Billy's coming with much delight. He was not only expert at his business, but being handsome, intelligent, and winning in his ways, he was before long looked upon more as an indispensable official companion than as a prisoner or a mere bootblack.

Every now and then he would write a letter to Tilly, and send it by some keeper or officer, and it was not long before she learned to reply, and her letters were brought back to him by the same party who delivered his.

But still the secret of his whereabouts was kept from her and all who knew him. There was even a veil of romance connected with the situation which Tilly did not care to penetrate, although she did not suspect the truth or anything that approached it.

In his intercourse with the various officers and prisoners he had made the acquaintance of some strange and remarkable characters, both in the reformatory departments and the charitable ones.

In the insane asylum, especially, had he met with strange beings. At first he could not comprehend them. He had never before been brought in contact with any insane person, and it was not until Dr. McDonald explained the causes of insanity, and the various phases which it assumed, did he understand much about it.

But there was much about which was sadly humorous in the cases with which he became acquainted. For Nicholas Biddle, once secretary of the United States Treasury, and he had a rude money manufactory. He would enter, with all seriousness, into all financial questions of national importance, and in his way show all inquirers how to solve the problem of national finance.

Then there was another who imagined himself to be the Great Napoleon on the island of St. Helena, and in his deportment was every inch an emperor. France and her future was his hobby, and he would talk to all who would listen regarding the famous campaigns he had passed through, and in such a way as to seriously impress those who did not know him to be only a poor lunatic from New York.

And there was another who regarded himself as Washington, and the interests of the United States were continually uppermost in his mind. Still another regarded himself as a great general,

on whom rested the safety of the Union. He was harmless, and to keep him quiet he was allowed to build a fort at the northern end of the island, for the purpose, as he believed, of keeping the navies of foreign countries from entering the harbor. Thousands of people who have sailed up the sound will remember this little fort and its luna-romantic history.

Some imagined themselves kings, some queens, some one thing, and some another, and Billy soon found pleasure in conversing with them and learning to understand their various idiosyncrasies.

But there was one patient to whom he was strangely attracted, a woman about thirty-five years of age, with bright, brown eyes, and hair prematurely gray, who had been a patient there for fifteen years. She was harmless the most of the time, and the doctor told him it was some love affair, some family trouble that had taken her there.

Behind the mask which sickness and wild insanity had seared her with, there was evidence of former beauty of a rare order.

Who she was or what had been her history no one pretended to know; but she had sane periods in which it would have been difficult for an expert in insanity to have found her insane, and during these periods she was allowed to go much at large, and even to attend on other patients.

She was known as Barbara Wild, and beyond that but little was reported.

On Blackwell's Island, in this department especially, but little inquiry is made beyond the first date given when the patient is taken into the hospital, and so Barbara Wild was regarded as a patient for life, and but little attention given to her going or coming.

As before stated, Billy had somehow taken a great liking to this strange woman, and she, in her lucid moments, was as strangely drawn towards him.

Every morning when he went to the office of the surgeons and blackened their boots he would contrive to meet Barbara Wild and walk with her around the grounds, listening to her vagaries when not in her mind, and wondering at the strange stories she would tell when in her own mind.

They became great friends, and if she did not see him every morning she would rave and become so unmanageable that it was at last thought best to bring them together as a matter of economy.

"Billy," said she, "I am not going to live long, and I want you with me all the time."

"That's all right, I'll stay with you," said Billy, for he had learned that it was best to humor those patients.

"But I am not crazy," she persisted.

"Of course you are not," said Billy.

They were walking through a shaded mall.

"Billy, who are you?" she asked, suddenly, catching him by the arm.

"I give it up," said he, carelessly.

"Ah! but I know you. You have been sent to me."

"No. I have been sent here for a year by some devil I don't know."

"I once had a boy with such eyes as you have, with such hair, only a little lighter. He was a lovely babe, but they took him from me, and I have not seen him since."

"Well, somebody took me from somebody, I guess," replied Billy, carelessly.

"Oh, they have such a cruel way of taking children from fond mothers and adopting them into rich families, while the mothers are brought here to die in sorrow. Oh, yes, they do it."

"You had a boy? Where is he?"

"He was taken from me, and I was brought here to forget him and everything else," said the poor maniac.

This story she had told him several times, and he had come to regard it as one of her fancies.

"Oh, but he was beautiful."

"Who was beautiful?"

"William Barnwell," said she, while her eyes wandered wildly away to other scenes.

"What is that you say? William Barnwell?" asked Billy, with much earnestness.

"Yes, and he loved me, or he said he did, and our child was such a beauty."

Billy became greatly interested.

"Who is this Barnwell you are speaking about?"

"My true lover," she replied, earnestly.

"But where is he now?"

"In heaven, perhaps."

"Tell me of him?"

"Do you love me, Billy?"

"Yes; tell me of this Barnwell."

"Of course you love me, you are so much like him. But, Billy, I am going to die."

"No, no, not yet."

"Oh, yes, I had a dream last night. I dream-



ed he was married to another, and I must die, or he will be arrested for bigamy."

"I know a man by the name of Barnwell."

"You do?" she asked, eagerly clutching him by the arm.

"Yes, a broker; a big-bug."

"That must be he. He was very proud, very ambitious. He loved me, and I was very rich. We were secretly married. He got possession of my wealth, a portion of it. Then his love became cold. Our boy was stolen, and my heart left my body. He was such a beautiful child. Then I got lost in searching for him, and they brought me here."

Billy was silent. There was something that the poor maniac mother had said which chained his attention and left no room for questioning.

"But he did not get all of my father's wealth. Ah, I have thousands buried where he can never find it! Hark, I will tell you where it is!" she said, catching him around the neck as they walked along.

Billy smiled as he thought of the many other strange characters he had met there.

"Will you come and see me to-morrow?"

"Why, of course I will," said he, honestly.

"Then I will tell you. But I have got to die, of course I have, for if I didn't he would be arrested for bigamy. But I will tell you where my gold is hidden, for you look so much like our boy. I secreted it for him."

"What was his name?"

"Claude, Claude Barnwell. Oh, he was such a beautiful baby! But some fiend stole him, and they brought me here."

"Oh, you will feel better to-morrow."

"No. Do you join with these people here and call me crazy?"

"No; but you have strange ideas," replied Billy.

"Yes, I suppose so. But I remember everything correctly. Why, I can mark out to you the very spot where my gold is hidden, and if you find it you will not say I am crazy, will you?"

"I should say not. But I must go now. I will see you to-morrow," he said, extending his hand.

"Will you surely come?"

"I will, indeed."

"Don't dissappoint me; you look so much like my boy, Claude, that it would break my heart if you should prove false to me. You will come?"

"Yes, I will."

"And do you love me, Billy?"

The boy was silent. The strange feelings which had been all the while drawing him towards this woman were summarized in that one question, "Do you love me?"

"Yes, Barbara, I do love you," he said at length.

"You do?" she asked, with great energy. "Call me mother."

"Why?"

"Because I am to die so soon, and I was never called 'mother,' although I am one."

"Well, I must leave you now."

"But call me mother."

"Good-bye, mother," he said, earnestly.

"Great Heaven! mother! He calls me mother!" said the poor creature, bowing her face in her hands.

While thus engaged, Billy stole softly away and ran to the penitentiary building.

The strangeness of the interview, the name of Barnwell, which she had mentioned with such feeling, served as a subject for thought until the next day. What did it mean?

The next day he did not see her when he visited the officers' quarters of the insane asylum, and so the subject still revolved in his mind.

On the following day he inquired for her, and was told that she was very sick, and that she was continually calling for him.

After performing his duties he was allowed to visit her ward. He found her very sick, but almost entirely rational. She almost sprang from her cot as he entered the door.

"Oh, Billy, I am so glad you have come, for I could not die without seeing you."

Billy knelt by her bedside.

"I have only a few minutes longer to live."

"Oh, no; you are not going to die now," said he, with much feeling.

"Yes, I am. My time has come. My dreams tell me this is my last day of trouble. But I am so happy at seeing you; I am perfectly rational now, and I remember all I have told you. There is something about you, Billy, which draws my heart out of its dreadful shadows. Tell me something about yourself."

Billy told her the simple, unromantic story of his life, and it seemed to interest her greatly. For several moments she held his hand in hers as he knelt at the bed-side, and her eyes seemed fixed on vacancy, as though out of it she was trying to draw the ends of broken threads and forgotten shapes. At length she asked:

"And is this all you know respecting yourself?"

"Everything."

Again she lapsed into reflective silence.

"Yes," she said, at length, "it must be so. God tells me it is so, and He has brought you here to close the eyes of your mother."

"My mother!" he asked, starting to his feet.

"Yes, I see it all, all. You were sent here for a purpose, and by your father."

"Good heavens! What do you mean? Mr. Barnwell my father?"

"Yes, and he is my lawful husband. He stole you from me when a babe, and because I mourned for you he had me sent here. He found you out and contrived the plot which brought you here."

"If that is so!" exclaimed Billy, fiercely—

"Hold, my boy. Leave it all to God. He will make all things right in His own good time and way. My time with you is short, so come closer to me; yes, yes, I feel that it is all true; you are my darling long-lost boy. Oh! come closer, closer, closer to me!" she said, passionately folding him to her breast.

Intense excitement brought the tears to his eyes, and he passively allowed the woman to fold him to her wildly palpitating breast. She was sitting up in her bed, and as she held his hand in her close embrace she rocked back and forth, moaning a lullaby like the one she might have been humming when her babe was torn from her arms.

Half an hour passed thus, and the shades of night were gathering around them. Finally she roused and released him.

"Now sit here on my bed, for I have much to tell you before I go," said she.

"Oh, do not speak of dying now, if you are my mother and I am your son, you must live; we will escape from this horrible place and be happy together."

"God ruleth, my boy, God ruleth. In His own good way he brought you here to confound the guilty and heal my poor heart. My work is nearly finished; yours is yet to be done."

"And it shall be well done," he said, clenching his fist.

"But above all, be just. What I have told you I believe to be true. I am in my right mind now, thank God, and the mists of years are all brushed away. Nature, my heart, and my God tells me that you are my child. I do not ask you to believe it now, but that you may find out the truth, I shall leave a diary with you, written in my sane moments, and in it you will read the sad story of my life. Open that trunk; reach under the clothes and get that small blank book."

Billy did as directed.

"In it is the story, but that is not all; I told you that I had money hidden. He tried to get it all, but something told me to hide a portion. I buried it in a little cave in an uncultivated field, on Staten Island, in the town of Stapleton. Here is a drawing of the locality which will guide you to it. Then here is another diagram that will assist you in finding the exact spot where the gold lies hidden," she added, with whispered vehemence.

"But how long has it been hidden there?" he asked.

"Fifteen years, and it is there now. I have seen it in my dreams, bright and yellow, and a vision showed me this very scene wherein I was giving this book to my long-lost son. Take it. Hide it next to your heart. Don't let any of the officers see it or they will take it from you."

"I will be careful, mother."

"Oh, thank God for that word!" she exclaimed, taking his head in her hands and kissing him passionately. "And you will remember me, Claude?"

"Yes, yes, forever, and I will revenge your wrongs. I will escape from this place; I will procure your release, and we will be ever so happy yet."

"No, no, Claude, I shall go to-night and leave you."

Billy bowed his head. There was something in her manner, her tone of voice, which told him that she was his mother. But the thought of losing her so soon after finding her was agonizing.

"He used to have a familiar spirit," she said, rousing herself again.

"A what?" asked Billy, not understanding the meaning of the term.

"A familiar spirit; a man who was in harmony with him in everything; who would do his bidding like a slave; whom he seemed to have the power of calling whenever he wanted him."

"Who was he?"

"His name escapes my memory now, though it was something like Burnsby," said she, as if trying to remember.

"Burnsby? Wasn't it Ponsby?"

"Ah! yes, Ponsby! That is the name. How did you come to know it?"

"Why, that was the fellow's name that he sent me to, with the letter," said Billy excitedly.

"It was?"

"Yes. He sent me to him with a letter, and told to do whatever he said, and he sent me with another letter to a woman that lived on Broome street. This woman gave me a package to a chap on the Bowery."

"Well, go on," said she excitedly.

"And this package was the jewelry. While doing this errand I was arrested; the rest you know, for I told it all to you before."

"Ah! I see it all now. This Ponsby is still in his employ. By some means or other he found out who you are. Did he question you any?"

"Yes, he asked me lots of questions."

"About yourself?"

"Yes, all about who I was, and all I could remember about myself."

"And you told him?"

"To be sure, I told him the same as I told you."

"Yes, and by this means he found out that you was his son. Then he wished to get rid of you; to crush you from the face of the earth, and so he, with Ponsby, contrived the trap into which you fell and you were brought here. Do you understand it?"

"It was a job, hey?"

"It was a conspiracy."

"We calls such things jobs."

"But do you understand it?"

"You bet I do, and if I ever get a chance—"

"Careful, my son. Above all things do not be rash. It is the calm, quiet ones who win. Curb your feelings, study all the particulars; be sure that you are right—"

"Then go ahead. I understand that. Oh, but won't I get even with 'em!"

"Remember, my boy, that William Barnwell is your father."

"Yes, but he injured you."

"But I forgive him."

"But I don't. And as for that snoozer Ponsby, I'll make it red hot for him."

"The estate that Barnwell has belongs to you, for it belonged to me."

"But he is married to another woman."

"Married!" she asked, springing up and clutching Billy by the arm.

"Yes, I heard so."

"It cannot be. I am his lawful wife. Stop, Billy, lift that trunk lid—there—right there in that little box; hand it to me."

Billy did as directed.

She took the box and opening it, produced a marriage certificate.

"There; he destroyed a copy which he thought original, but this is the original. This is the certificate of our marriage. Place it in the book which I gave you. Treasure it, for hereafter, if you seek to get possession of that estate, it will be of service to you. And here is my will, it was drawn last night and witnessed properly, and made in your favor. This may be contested, but in the hands of a smart lawyer, and in the presence of all the facts which I have here placed in your keeping, it will become a power. God bless it to you, my son, and may the right triumph."

Billy took the documents and placed them between the leaves of his book.

"I shall be gone when the trial comes, but in my new spirit life I will hover over you and direct you. But be just above all things."

"I will, mother, believe me."

"I feel that you will, my boy, I feel that you will, I do not understand how he could have married another while I was yet alive, and Dr. Bird will tell you that I have received no notice of a divorce. But let it all pass. Truth crushed to earth will rise again. I leave it all in your hands, my boy, my Claude."

"But will you not assist me, mother, in making him do you justice?"

"No, my boy, I am going on a long journey, and you must rely upon yourself."

"Oh, do not talk so about dying."

"Death is close at hand, my child, and it cannot be put away. But God will guard and direct you, never fear."

"But I shall be all alone, and he is rich."

"Ah! and you will also be rich."

Billy remained silent and wondering.

"Hark!" said the invalid, starting up. "Quick! secrete the book. Some one is coming."

The boy thrust the book under his striped jacket and gazed anxiously around. He saw no one, neither could he hear the footsteps of any one approaching, but the unnaturally keen sense of hearing, of the poor woman, caught the sound of some one approaching and was sure of it.

"Don't leave me, will you, my boy?" she asked in a husky whisper.

"No, no, nothing shall part us," replied Billy.

At that instant the physician opened the door and entered the room.



## CHAPTER VI.

## SAVED FROM A PAUPER'S GRAVE.

"COME, Billy, it is time for you to go to your quarters," said the physician.

"But I would like to stay with her to-night, sir; she is my—"

The poor woman pinched his arm, and as he caught her eye he saw that she did not wish him to divulge the secret.

"Well, if your keeper will give you a written permit, I will agree to it, Billy, but it is against the rules, you know," said he, approaching nearer.

"Please, doctor, let him stay, I am very fond of him, and this is the last night I shall ever trouble you," pleaded the patient.

"Oh, I guess you are not going to leave us yet," said he, good-naturedly. "But if he gets a permit I will offer no objections."

"All right. Thank you, doctor, I'll get one from Tommy, I know, for he's a jolly good fellow," said Billy, pressing his mother's hand and starting for the door. "Good-bye; I'll be back soon—never fear."

"But if they refuse to let you come," said she, anxiously.

"I know he will not. I've done him many a good turn, and we're all right together," saying which he darted from the room, kissing back his hand to his mother.

"He appears to like your company as well as you like his," remarked the physician after Billy had gone.

"Yes, I love him next to God. Come nearer, doctor. You see I am perfectly sane now."

"You seem to be remarkably so."

"Yes, and to-night I shall die."

"Ah! don't talk that way, or I shall believe that you are not so sane as you pretend to be."

"But I speak the truth. To-morrow you shall think of what I have said. Promise me one thing, doctor; you have been very kind to me since you came; promise me that that boy shall have everything that belongs to me after my death."

"Oh, yes, if you wish it, certainly," said he, as he would agree to the whim of any patient. But as he came closer and gazed in her face he was startled at the change he saw there.

She had been his patient for three years, and he had come to know her pretty thoroughly. He took her wrist and felt her pulse, and then, going to the medicine department, he prepared a draught and sent it by an attendant nurse. His idea was that her vitality had run very low, and something must be given to assist nature in re-asserting herself.

In about an hour Billy returned with a written permit from his keeper to pass the night at the asylum. He went directly to the office, where he met three of the assistant physicians, one of whom was the man who had agreed to allow him to remain with his mother.

"So you got the permit, did you, Billy?" he asked.

"Yes, sir. Oh, Tommy and I are all right. Don't you want some apples and oranges?" said he, taking half a dozen of each from his pockets and placing them on the table.

"Certainly. Where did you get them?"

"Some friends sent them, I suppose; I found them in Tommy's possession just now."

"Well, I'll try one," said Dr. Bird, taking out his knife and reaching toward them.

"No, you don't," said Billy, placing his hand between them.

"What do you mean?"

"I suspect something wrong," said he.

"Where? what?"

"I have enemies in the city who would like to squelch me, and, as they never did anything good for me, I suspect there's a nasty job in this fruit. So I brought it here for you to find out."

The physicians exchanged glances.

"We'll soon see," said Dr. Bird.

"Have we a romance among us?" asked another.

"Let us see," said Dr. Bird again, taking one of the oranges into the chemical room.

The others gathered around to watch the experiment which he was about making.

He cut the orange and squeezed the juice into a glass. Then he poured some other chemical into it, and in an instant there was a sudden change in the contents of the glass. The three physicians started back in surprise.

"Arsenic!" they each exclaimed.

"Yes, and a good quantity of it, too," said Dr. Bird.

"Didn't I drop to it all right?" asked Billy.

"I should say so. But if you had eaten that orange you would have dropped to something else."

"Let's try another one."

Another was tried with the same result.

"Have you any idea who sent them to you?"

"I have, but of course I can't prove it."

"Well, it was a diabolical job, anyway, and the person who did it ought to swing high."

"I'll drop on him some day, never mind. But I must go and see Barbara now," said he, turning away to the door.

After he had gone the physicians conversed for some time on the subject, testing the apples only to find them thoroughly charged with the deadly poison, and then the conversation turned upon the patient Barbara and her strange love for the handsome bootblack.

As Billy entered the room his mother uttered a cry of joy and extended her open arms to him.

"Did you think I wasn't coming?" he asked.

"No, I knew you would come; and I also knew that you had escaped a great and deadly danger."

Billy started in surprise.

"How did you know it?" he asked.

"I saw you and the poisoned fruit."

Billy was completely dumbfounded.

"It was sent by William Barnwell, through one of his tools. But let it pass now. You will escape them, my son, for the same power that has guided you to me will protect you from harm."

He saw by the dim light that her face had greatly changed during the short time that he had been gone. There was a look in it that was painfully spiritual.

"Mother, you are sick!" he said after looking at her a few moments.

"No, no, my boy, I am getting well," she said, while a look of seraphic beauty overspread her wan and sunken features.

"But you look so strange," he said, taking her hand.

"Ah, yes. Strange, because I am slowly putting off the form in which I have suffered so long. Dear, darling, Claude, I know you will be good, and that we shall be happy hereafter. Remember what I have told you. Be right, be just, and fear not forever."

"I will try and follow your directions, mother."

"God give you strength to," said she, clasping him closer in her arms.

During the next five minutes she was engaged in calm, rational prayer. It was the first one that had ever been sent up for his especial benefit, and the words, and the tone in which they were uttered, sank deep into his yielding heart.

What a noble, lovable woman she was, he thought, and what devil's work it had been that tore them apart for all these years.

Soon afterwards Dr. Bird came into the room and manifested much anxiety about the health of Barbara.

"You do not look well to-night," he said, taking her hand. "Did you take the draught I sent you?"

"No, doctor, I do not need it, I shall be better presently, much better. Be kind to my boy here, won't you, doctor?" she added earnestly.

"Certainly, we are always kind to Billy."

"Thank you, thank you, for he is my son."

"Well, well, I will come up and see you again before I retire, and I trust you will feel better then."

"Oh, I shall, doctor. I know I shall. This dreadful mesh will be broken then."

"No, no; you must not talk so, Barbara. Stay with her, Billy, and if she gets worse come to the office and let me know," said he, going from the room.

"You will not leave me, will you, Claude?"

"No, no, I will not."

"I ask no more. Oh! how the touch of your hand thrills me. Place the other on my forehead."

Billy did as requested, and the poor creature closed her eyes for several moments.

Under ordinary circumstances he would have felt afraid to be alone with such a person, but somehow there was that about her, and between them, in fact, which banished fear and drew him even closer to her as her breath grew shorter.

At length she started suddenly and gazed wildly about the room.

Billy held her firmly.

"What is it, mother?" he asked, tenderly.

"Oh yes, yes, I see," said she, laying calmly back on her pillow again. "I was wondering what brought me back to earth again; it was to behold you again, my boy."

She kissed him, and he was startled at the chill upon her lips.

"You have my book?"

"Yes, yes, I have it."

"Guard it well. And do you think you can find the place where the gold is hidden?"

"Yes, I am sure I can, mother."

"Then, farewell, my son, for I am going, and oh! so happy. Hold me close to you, my boy."

"Yes, mother."

"Be good, and—and—remember me—won't you?" she asked, in a husky whisper.

"Yes, yes; I wish I had a picture of you, mother," he said, with unfeigned regret.

"The book—it will tell you all. He has one."

"Then it shall be mine."

"Yes—God bless you—Claude, I—"

There followed a slight contortion of the limbs: her hands grasped his like a vise; the face shadowed a momentary pang, and then stilled into a pleasant smile, and then she was at rest.

Billy had never seen a person die before, and he did not know that she was really no more.

She still grasped his hands painfully tight as though reluctant to part with him, and when he attempted to withdraw them he found it next to impossible.

The glassy look which came into those sorrowful eyes frightened him, and he was on the point of calling for help when Doctor Bird returned.

"Oh, sir, she is worse; she is so still and cold."

The physician approached and assisted Billy to withdraw his hands.

"Billy, she is dead," said he.

"Dead?" asked the boy, with a look of anguish and surprise.

"Yes, she is dead. Her prediction has come true. She was a strange woman. Well, well, it is all over now and you can go to the keeper's lodge for the remainder of the night, and I will send the nurses here to lay her out and prepare her for burial."

"Where will you bury her, doctor?" he asked, earnestly.

"Why, in the field with the rest," said he.

"In Potter's Field?"

"Yes. She has no friends to claim her body."

"No, no, doctor, do not bury her there; she was my mother," exclaimed Billy.

"Your mother!"

"Yes, she was, she told me so."

"Oh, my boy, I guess she was only wandering."

"No, no, I believe it, Doctor, and she has left everything to me, together with the name of my father."

"Can it be possible?"

"Indeed it is. Do not let her be buried where I can never visit her grave, please don't," he pleaded.

The physician was silent and thoughtful, while Billy led him by the arm, and gazed pleadingly up into his kindly face. He remembered the strange manner in which his patient had been drawn to the little prisoner, and although she had been crazy a large portion of the time since she had been under his care, yet it was not for him to say that she did not possess that mysterious insight, by some called clairvoyance, which enabled her to single out her offspring.

"But," said he, at length. "It will cost money to remove her from here to a Christian burying ground."

Billy was silent. This thought had not occurred to him before. What could he do to save the body of his mother from the ignominy of Potter's Field.

"I will tell you, sir. She told me where I could go and get some money that belonged to her, and if you will see her taken away from here and buried like a Christian, I will pay you when I get out and get it. Please do, Doctor."

"Well, Billy, I will do it. So come along, and let the attendants attend to their duties here."

"Oh, sir, you are the best man in the world," he exclaimed, taking him by the hand.

He was about to follow his benefactor from the room, when he turned and kissed the cold forehead of his mother fervently.

"Oh, won't I get even with him?" he muttered between his clenched teeth, as he turned away.

The next day Billy took a last look at the body as the undertaker from the city closed the coffin-lid and bore her away. Tears streamed down his cheeks, and he followed mournfully behind the carriage until it reached the ferry, then, like one bereft, he turned sadly back to his task again, and thought of the poor body that was being borne to Greenwood without one solitary follower or mourner.

In two or three days from that time Dr. Bird received a bill from the undertaker, together with the number of the grave where she had been buried.

This he gave to Billy, and he placed it carefully between the leaves of the diary that had been entrusted to him, and then calmly awaited events.

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE ENVOY TO BLACKWELL'S ISLAND.

WILLIAM BARNWELL was pacing nervously up and down the narrow confines of his private office. Deep anxiety was seated on his brow, and most people observing him would have believed that some important business had gone



wrong with him. But it was not so; he was only impatient to learn the result of a visit that he had sent Ponsby on to Blackwell's Island.

After waiting thus impatiently for an hour or more, Ponsby put in an appearance.

Getting up and shutting the door of the private office carefully behind his envoy, he turned to him with much anxiety.

"Well, what has happened?"

"Nothing much. Our friend, Billy the Bootblack, is alive and well," said Ponsby, throwing aside his hat.

"He is?" he asked, with earnestness.

"Yes; he is in good condition."

"Did he receive the fruit you sent him?"

"Yes, but—"

"Was it prepared?"

"Yes."

"Then what? he did not eat it?"

"I should say not, of course."

"Then who did?"

"No one, I guess."

"Could he have suspected anything wrong?"

"Of course I dared not press the inquiry, and, therefore, I could not tell."

"Could it be possible?" mused Barnwell.

"And the lunatic, Barbara Wild, you told me to inquire about—"

"Well, what of her?" he asked quickly.

"She is dead."

"Dead!"

"Dead and buried."

A look of fiendish satisfaction stole over the face of Barnwell.

"Poor girl, she is out of her trouble," he said after a few moments' silence.

"She appears to have taken a great fancy to Billy before her death."

"What is that you say—to Billy, the boy?"

"Yes, they were together a large part of the time. In fact, he was with her when she died."

Barnwell leaped to his feet.

"With her when she died?" he asked, his face growing deathly pale.

"Yes."

"Are you sure of that?"

"So I learned at the hospital."

"What else did you learn?"

"That she was taken from the island, and was buried in some one of the cemeteries around New York, thus escaping Potter's Field."

Barnwell opened his mouth as though to give vent to some exclamation, but it died away in a groan and he sank into his chair.

"You seem interested," said Ponsby.

"No, only it seemed a little strange that the boy and the woman should have met. Well, it is all right, I suppose. Come and see me again in a day or two."

"Certainly. You know me all right."

Barnwell made no reply, and Ponsby hesitated to go.

"Well, I will go now. By the way, I have got to pay a note to-day; can you accommodate me with a hundred dollars?"

Barnwell did not even look up, but taking out his check-book he wrote a check for the amount and handed it to him without a word.

Ponsby took the check and withdrew without a comment. In fact, there was no occasion for any, each knew the nature of the transaction, and that was enough.

That very afternoon Barnwell obtained a permit from the Commissioners of Charities and Correction and visited Blackwell's Island.

The first place he visited was the office of Dr. McDonald, chief of the Insane Hospital. He made inquiries regarding Barbara Wild, and was referred to Dr. Bird, who had charge of the patient at the time of her death.

Dr. Bird had reflected much on the strange romance of the poor woman's life and death, and he had quite come to the conclusion that there was more in it than had yet appeared. At all events, when a distinguished-looking stranger wished to know the particulars of her death and burial, he resolved to state them as he saw fit, whether it accorded with the truth or not, believing that he was serving the ends of retribution if not of justice.

"Yes, she died about a week ago," said he, watching Barnwell carefully.

"And where was she buried?"

"In our graveyard, of course."

"Oh, she was, eh? You are sure of it?"

"I should be," remarked the doctor, carelessly.

"I heard she was taken away from the island."

"Oh, we are not responsible for rumors. But I am at a loss to know how any rumors respecting a friendless maniac could have arisen."

"She was friendless, then?"

"Entirely."

"Was she rational when she died?"

"Well, for that matter, nearly all persons who are mentally disturbed, recover their proper mentality before death. That is very common."

"Did she say anything while thus restored?"

"Nothing to me, but I was not with her when she died. The attendant, however, did not mention anything in particular that she said."

"That is strange. I heard that one of the prisoners from the penitentiary was with her."

"That, sir, could not possibly be. The two institutions are entirely separate," replied the doctor.

"Ah, so I supposed. Then I must have been wrongly informed," said Barnwell.

"Undoubtedly. But will you allow me to ask what interest you had in Barbara Wild?"

"Oh, oh, certainly. I—I knew her when she was young; that's all."

Dr. Bird watched him closely. It was now his turn to question, but Barnwell had learned all that he cared to know, and so put an end to the interview as speedily as possible. He would have asked the broker some questions respecting Billy and the poisoned fruit, but he would give him no chance to do so, and soon after left the building.

"That man knows more than he will tell, but his very presence and anxiety convince me that there is a mystery between him and Barbara Wild, and perhaps this handsome boy, Billy the bootblack," mused the doctor, when alone.

But there is a continual recurrence of romantic episodes in a lunatic asylum, and he had already become so familiar with them that it took something more than ordinary to arouse his stricter attention.

The next day Barnwell and Ponsby met as per appointment. The broker was more calm, and in addition was even a trifle sarcastic.

"Ponsby, when I employ you at a good price to find out anything for me, I wish you to be sure that your information is correct," said he.

"What do you mean, sir?" asked Ponsby.

"The story you told me regarding the death of Barbara Wild is all moonshine."

"Are you sure, sir?"

"Positive; I have been to the island myself and saw the physician who had charge of her at the time."

Ponsby sat with downcast eyes, and was silent for some time.

"But the boy?" he said, after a while.

"There was no meeting between them. It could not have been according to the discipline of the place."

Again Ponsby was silent.

"You must have been incorrectly informed."

"Possibly, but I thought I was not."

"Well, the boy is there yet, and if he will not eat fruit he ought to have some other delicacy."

"I understand."

"Something that would make him forget his imprisonment."

"Exactly."

"Now what shall it be?"

"Give me time to think."

"You said you knew some of the keepers there."

"I do; three of them."

"Connected with the penitentiary?"

"Yes."

"How well do you know them?"

"One of them is completely in my power, so much so that I can not only deprive him of his place, but send him to Sing-Sing," replied Ponsby.

"Will he follow your instructions?"

"I think so."

"Will you try him?"

"I will. But how much money could I borrow provided everything works well?"

"A thousand dollars."

"That will do."

"Then we understand each other. Now I do not wish to see you again until everything is satisfactory, or, if I do, I will drop you a note."

"All right, I will attend to it at once."

"Let there be no escape this time."

"Not if I can prevent it."

"But there must be none."

"I so understand it."

With this they separated.

Ponsby was not entirely satisfied in his own mind that he had been wrongly informed respecting the affair, but as it was purely a matter of business with him now, he resolved to treat it as such and ask no questions that he could not answer himself.

Three days passed away. Billy had regained much of his former elasticity, for his mind was fully made up regarding his future conduct.

In the Penitentiary, and connected with the barber's shop, was a young fellow about Billy's own age who was an adept at his trade, and like Billy was a general favorite among the officers. He had much more liberty than the other prisoners when not engaged in the little shop, and the two boys became great friends.

At night Billy would study over the diary of his mother's life, and during the day he threw its sad

influences aside and became himself again, a jovial, brave, good-hearted fellow.

This young barber was known as Fritz. He was a German, but was unhappily possessed of a very dangerous temper that had brought him to be a prisoner for attempting the life of his mother. To all save Billy he was distant and uncommunicative, but the two boys were great friends, their cells were adjoining, and any favor which came from the keepers for favors they had shown them were shared between them.

One night about ten o'clock a dish of chicken soup was sent up from the officers' table. This was not the first time that such delicacies had been extended to Billy, and he always made it a point to share it with Fritz. But on this occasion Billy had eaten a hearty supper, and not feeling very well on account of it, he gave this luxury to Fritz without tasting of it.

Fritz ate it, and within two hours from that time he was dead.

At the time Billy did not suspect anything strange. The officers said he had died of heart disease; that he was predisposed to it.

But after poor Fritz was buried, and he was left alone o' nights, he began to put this and that together, and ask himself if the death that Fritz had died was not intended for him.

He asked Dr. Bird for his opinion, and the doctor shook his head gravely.

A week past on, and poor Fritz was forgotten by all save Billy. Had he been sacrificed for him?

It was a dark night and all was as silent as the grave on Blackwell's Island. The distant hum of the city or some wild cry from the Lunatic Asylum was all that could be heard.

Billy the bootblack pushed aside the bars of his grated window and fastening a knotted cord to a staple in the wall, he gazed wistfully out toward the Long Island shore.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### BILLY ESCAPES FROM BLACKWELL'S ISLAND.

ALL was still on Blackwell's Island. The lights gleamed from the opposite shore; the silent sailing craft glided up the river, and seemingly far away the sound of oars, as they struck their measured time, caught the young prisoner's ear.

The liberty he had enjoyed was a sham, for the eyes of the guard were continually upon him, and when night came he was marched with the other prisoners to his narrow cell and there confined until early morning.

This condition of life our hero resolved to break. But it was not the work of a few hours. Days and nights had to be sacrificed to it, but at length his prison bars were sawed and the knotted rope had been prepared to assist in his escape.

Far away he could hear the song of those who enjoyed their liberty, and bright lights glittered from afar, where light hearts beamed and reveled in their freedom.

He was a prisoner, but for what?

Nothing.

He resolved to escape. Even more than his personal liberty depended upon it. There was a future to shape, wrongs to be avenged, and in the heart of this boy the spirit dwelt that should yet make many tremble.

Cautiously peering up and down, and finding all still—all sleeping—he lowered the knotted rope on which he had spent so much time all alone and unsuspected, even laughing and joking with his poor dead friend Fritz while at work upon it.

Then he waited and listened. Had the lowering of the rope alarmed none of the inmates of the cells below him?

Not an adverse breath arose. The stars still twinkled in the cool vault above, the lights of the distant shore still attracted him, and summoning up all his courage, he took the rope in his hands and crept from the unbarred window.

He was suspended.

Slowly, knot by knot he lowered himself.

Down past the windows of those who occupied cells below him he went, but all was silent.

Step by step, and at last he reached the earth.

Was that freedom?

For full five minutes he waited in the deep shadow of the building, gazing with keen sense in every direction to see if aught reported that he had been observed.

All was still.

Cautiously creeping across the path which surrounded the Penitentiary building, he soon found a hedge in which he could secrete himself.

His eye was upon the river, his heart was beyond it.

Where was the guard?

Along in the deeper shadow of the hedge he



erept, darting onward a few feet at a time, until he reached the river's edge.

What now?

The diary of his mother's life was hidden under his striped jacket. He could not plunge into the river and swim with it, for the water would obliterate all.

While crouching in the shade of a ledge and asking himself what he should do, the puffing of a tugboat greeted his ear.

There was danger or there was safety in that measured puff. Which was it?

He waited until the tug was abreast of him. The breath which her engines gave forth showed that a heavy burden trailed behind.

In a deep shadow he waited. The tug passed on, and a heavy raft of timber began to show itself. Here was hope. It was within a few rods of where he stood.

Taking the book his mother had left him in his mouth, he waded in to the water, and holding his head high, he struck out for the raft.

The tide bore him away, but with much effort he managed to reach it and to pull himself upon the logs of the raft.

Thus far fortune had favored him.

He took the book from his mouth. It was dry and safe.

He gazed around him. Already the island of his captivity seemed passing away, and liberty lay before him.

It was nearly midnight. Lights gleamed on either shore, but they were all-night lights.

Puff, puff, puff! The waves trickled up among the logs, but thus far he was safe.

Onward like a floating mass, and the city of New York came in view. Slowly on, and yet no one molested him.

An hour passed, and he was off the Battery. Where was that raft bound for?

Without stopping to settle the question in his own mind, he saw a chance of landing at the Battery, and again taking the book in his mouth, he quietly dropped from the log on which he had been seated and swam towards the shore.

He reached it in safety. But his dress!

Would not that betray him wherever he went? What was to be done?

He paused but a moment on the shore, and then climbing the sea-wall he found himself upon the beautiful park which now surrounds the quaint building, denominated Castle Garden.

Silence still reigned, and nothing alive re-echoed his stealthy tread.

He seated himself upon one of the benches and began to ruminate. At length he heard a peculiar grunt, and turning around he saw a drunken sailor sleeping within ten feet of where he sat.

Billy approached and examined him.

He had taken off his coat for a pillow, and lay there as happy as a lord. He paused a moment to reflect, and then possessed himself of the coat and hat. They fitted him tolerably well. Why not the trousers?

His was a desperate case. The sailor would have no trouble in proving who he was, even if he was found with a prison garb beside him, so he unbuttoned his pants, and without much trouble pulled them from the drunken sleeper, and then taking off his own, he encased himself in a respectable suit, and started across the Battery Park towards Broadway.

Looking at himself after walking a few blocks, he concluded there was no further need of anxiety regarding himself, and so he walked with a cool, indifferent stride towards his former haunts.

At Trinity Church he saw it was almost three o'clock in the morning. Where should he go?

He felt in his pocket to see if he had any money, or rather to see if he had taken what he had from his pocket when he exchanged pants.

Good gracious! He had forgotten to take his little store, some four dollars that he had received from the officers at various times.

What was to be done now? Should he return and get possession of it?

By this time the market and milk wagons began to cross the ferry at the foot of Whitehall street, and several people were abroad in the streets. To return was to place himself in imminent danger, and he resolved to let it go.

"It is only a fair trade that he should receive something to boot, between our rigs," said he, and resuming his walk he soon reached St. Paul's Church.

By this time the newsmen began to arrive and depart with bundles of morning papers.

The horse-cars were running more frequently, the market wagons were rattling over the streets noisily, and the business of the coming day began to manifest itself.

Billy gazed around him.

Only a few pedestrians were abroad, but three or four bummers lay asleep near the iron fence surrounding the church.

Among the rest was a poor boot-black who was lost to all the world as he slept the sleep of the tired while leaning in a sitting posture against a lamp-post.

His box stood beside him, and Billy stooped down to see if he could recognize him.

It was his little partner, Tommy Mack.

"Poor Tommy!" he mused, "I wonder what he would think if he knew who was here."

While standing over his friend a man approached.

He had evidently just arrived in town by an early train, and was looking anxiously around.

"Black yer boots?" Billy asked, almost from force of habit on seeing a stranger.

"Yes, boy; give me a shine," said the man.

"Here you are, boss," said Billy, taking Tommy's box and placing it before the customer.

"Do you sit up all night, sonny?"

"Oh, we keep open all night, boss," replied Billy, getting down to his work.

The gentleman laughed at the idea, but there was no more said till the job was completed.

"How much, sonny?"

"Ten cents, and as much more as you like."

"Well, there's a quarter; it's worth that to find a wide-awake boot-black at this hour of the morning."

"Thank you," said Billy, as the man hurried away. "Now, Tommy, I'll put your box back, and go for some hash."

Softly placing the box back again, he stood a moment, and then darted across into Ann street.

Going through it to Nassau street he found a saloon open, and at once called for coffee and cakes, a dish he had not tasted for a long time.

After finishing his early meal he sat for some time thinking what he should do next.

The wide world with its newly found sensations was before him.

Which way should he turn first?

Carelessly he began to feel in the pockets of his sailor's clothes.

He found a handkerchief, in one corner of which was the name of "Tom Walling, Ship Roarer." It was an ordinary silk handkerchief, but he resolved to cherish it and one day return it to its owner.

Searching still further, in the inside pockets of the coat he found a fine silk purse, in which there were three dollars in currency, and a silver half dollar.

The purse bore the same name, worked in silk, and the silver piece had various marks upon it, which showed conclusively that it was a keepsake.

"Not a bad exchange after all; it's just about even as far as money is concerned," mused Billy. "But he shall have them all back again, some day," he thought.

Getting up from the table he went to the bar, where he paid his check and bought a cigar, then ascending to the sidewalk again, he glanced around.

It was daylight. The hum of traffic had begun for the day, and the hundreds of early ones that the sluggard knows not of, were astir in the rough battle of life.

But yet it was too early to meet any of his old companions, even had he wished to do so, and with a strange mixture of feelings, he started down Fulton street toward the ferry.

Reaching Pearl street, he turned to the right and walked along toward the Battery. He had the diary which his dead mother had left him; should he go to Staten Island and find out if the buried treasure was a myth or not?

But supposing it was a myth, a fancy created in a disordered brain, what then? He was an escaped convict; what was the future that lay before him?

Engrossed with these thoughts, he walked slowly along, and by the time he reached the Staten Island Ferry, the hum of the busy day in New York had already reached nearly to its height.

He glanced toward the place where he had found the drunken sailor. He had gone, and dozens of people were crossing and recrossing the beautiful park on their various ways to business.

He entered the ferry-house just in time to catch the first boat.

## CHAPTER IX.

### FRIENDS AND CONSPIRATORS.

"I CAME to borrow a thousand dollars of you, Mr. Barnwell."

The broker turned squarely around in his chair and looked at him.

"Mr. Ponsby, has there been a funeral?" he asked, at length.

"There has."

"And has our little friend passed from this vale of tears?"

"He has. I saw him buried."

Fritz and Billy looked much alike in their prison dress.

"Poor boy. And you saw him buried?"

"I did. He was a great eater."

"Had a voracious appetite?"

"Yes. He would eat anything in the shape of chicken-soup that was sent him," said Ponsby.

"Chicken-soup! Indeed, but how was it that such luxuries were served to prisoners?"

"He was a favorite with the officers, and if there was anything left from their table it was generally sent to him."

"Indeed. And so he died by eating too much chicken-soup?"

"So it is said."

"Well, well, life is short at best," said Barnwell, clasping his hands and twirling his thumbs.

"It is indeed," replied Ponsby, with a sigh.

"And you wish to borrow one thousand dollars?"

"Yes, I have a note to pay this afternoon."

"Exactly," said Barnwell, writing in his check-book.

"I hope you will have no further anxiety."

"Oh, I guess everything is all right now. Of course I had a certain anxiety regarding this boy, but if you say he is dead, why I can feel that I have no further Christian duty to perform towards him."

"Certainly."

"Here is your check."

"And if anything else should come up wherein I could benefit you, let me know."

"Oh, of course. Good-day."

"Good-day," said Ponsby, taking the check and starting towards the door of the private office.

"Anything else?"

"Nothing."

With this the two men parted.

"Do I breathe free?" asked Barnwell of himself, as he was left alone. "Ah! money, thou art indeed a god. What cannot be done by thy potent power? Give me money, and I can override all law, and perch myself upon the highest round of respectability."

He sat there for a long time glorifying the power and potency of money, and as the shades of night drew near he returned to his house and his family, cheerful in spirit and full of the belief that money would work wonders.

\* \* \* \* \*

A few days afterward Tilly O'Neal received the following letter:

"DEAR TILLY—Things have changed with me since I wrote you last. The world is larger than I thought it was. Be true to me, Tilly, and I will show you before long that a fellow may start out a boot-black and become something better. I may not see you again for a long time. But if you will not forget me, you shall not regret it. I cannot tell you now where to write to me, but remember that I am thinking of you wherever I am.  
Yours,  
BILLY."

A few months had changed the wild news-girl into a seemingly refined, beautiful girl, for in her heart a new flower had begun to bloom and romance furnished the nourishment.

"Yes, mother," she said, after she had read the letter to her, "I believe in Billy. He was always so good to me that I will do as he says. A dozen young men who work in the neighborhood are flattering me every day, but none of them are so handsome and brave as my Billy is."

"But suppose you never see him again?"

Tilly gazed thoughtfully out of the window. "Billy may be handsome and brave, but he may see others that he likes better than he does you."

Still the beautiful girl was silent.

"Tilly, my child, I am older than you are. I know more of the human heart than I hope you may ever find out. I know what it is to love an ideal—a first love; but I warn you not to put your whole heart in this boy Billy. He may be all that you fancy him, and he may not be. Don't place too much trust in him."

"Mother!" was all she said.

"Mind, I do not tell you what to do; but such loves as this between you have oftener come to nought than otherwise; all I ask of you is not to let any good chance pass by, for you know you are getting to be a woman now, and you cannot always sell papers for a living."

Tilly was still thoughtful and silent.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Shiver my tarry top-lights!" said Tom Walling, as he staggered aboard the good ship *Roarer*, that lay at pier ten, East River.

"What's the matter, Tom?" asked Bill Bug, who held the morning watch.



"Matter! Look at them!"

Here he held up the prison garb which our friend Billy had left in exchange for that of a more respectable personage. He was in his drawers and undershirt.

"Stripes?"

"I should say so."

"How happened it?"

"Well, I got lousy, and lay down beyond there near Castle Garden for a snooze, and, demme, when I woke up I was stripped of my toggery, and this harness lay alongside of me."

"Well, that's funny."

"Funny? Why, it's all you might expect in New York. There is the blamest lot of land-sharks here that ever was known."

"But they don't wear striped suits, Tom," said his friend, looking laughingly at his rig as he came on board the ship.

"That's so, Bill. How is it, anyway?"

"I give it up. But that is a regular prison suit."

"A prison suit! So it is. What does it mean?" asked Tom.

"Where were you?"

"Well, duffing around the town."

"And you went to sleep?"

"Yes; I got too much of a cargo, and I was laying off and on to steady it when I fell asleep; and when I awoke I was stripped to the bare spars, and these sails lay alongside."

"There has been a game played on you, Tom. Did you have any money?"

This seemed to be the first time that the thought had occurred to him. He scratched his head for some time and tried to get his bearings.

"Well, Bill, I must have had some left, but I don't care for it so much as I do for the purse and handkerchief that I lost. You know they were given to me by Annie, and what will she say when I return without them?" said he, sadly.

"Bless my top-lights if I know. What made you go alone?"

"Well, when a fellow has been aboard continually for six months, he somehow wants to get a sniff of land air."

"You have got it. Ha! ha! ha!"

"That's so. But I wonder who this running-gear belongs to?"

"Some poor devil who has escaped from prison, I'll wager."

"Do you think so?"

"It's a regular prison rig, and he probably came across you while snoozing, and he quietly changed, that's all."

"Well, success attend him. I'm not the boy to keep a messmate back, but I wish he had left me my purse and handkerchief."

"Well, go below. It's all in the life of a sailor, you know."

Tom tried to believe that it was as his messmate had said, and so, passing over what had come upon him, he went below and finished his sleep.

That afternoon William Barnwell came on board to look after a cargo of spices that the good ship *Roarer* had brought, consigned to him.

The captain met him in his cabin. The affairs of the consignment were talked over, and then their conversation drifted into other and social channels.

"Well, well, this is a queer world," said jolly Captain Bain, after they had commented for some time upon social subjects.

"You must see much of it, and much of its queeriness," replied Barnwell.

"Indeed I do, Mr. Barnwell. In some respects this port is tame when compared with foreign ones, and in others it is away ahead."

"No doubt, no doubt; I have often thought that I should like to change places with you," said Barnwell, helping himself to the brandy which Captain Bain had set out.

"Well, you should have lots of fun in some cases, and trouble enough to make it up in some other ways."

"But it is a jolly life you lead, after all."

"Yes, taken all in all, a sailor's life is one of the jolliest in the world. By the way, that puts me in mind of what happened one of my men, Tom Walling, last night," and the captain laughed right heartily as he thought of it.

"What was it, pray?"

"Well, Tom wanted to go ashore as soon as we had made fast, and as he is a devilish good fellow, and the son of wealthy parents, by the way, I gave him a month's pay and let him go. Of course he at once went and got 'biling,' as you say, and some time during the night he rounded to and brought up on the Battery, where he went to sleep, swung his hammock on the grass and turned in for a right royal snooze. Well, when he woke up at about four bells, he found that some sharp land-lubber had taken his sailing gear and left him with bare poles."

"Stripped him, eh? Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Barnwell.

"Yes, but in place of his toggery the fellow had left a prison rig."

"A prison rig, eh?" and again he laughed.

"Yes. It seems as though some fellow who had escaped from some of your prisons came across poor Tom as he lay asleep, and quietly exchanged clothes with him," and the jolly captain laughed merrily.

And so did Barnwell. The brandy had molded him into a happy humor, and he saw nothing but comicality in the whole transaction. They laughed and drank brandy, and turned their conversation into other channels, keeping it up until the approach of night warned Barnwell that he must retire.

There was much excitement among the officers and keepers of the Penitentiary on the morning following Billy's escape. But there was not one of them who regretted it only in a point of social intercourse. He was a general favorite, and being known as such the keeper was rather pleased than otherwise that he had escaped without conviction.

Dr. Bird, of the hospital, heard of it, and it set him thinking again. Neither was he sorry for the escape of the handsome youth, for he felt sure that he had not only been imprisoned wrongfully, but he would one day right himself in the eyes of the world.

Three days after Billy's escape a man presented himself to the Commissioners of Charity and Correction.

"There has been an escape from Blackwell's Island," said he.

"Yes. What of it?" said one of the commissioners.

"What will you give to have him returned?"

"The usual reward; one hundred dollars."

"Ah! It was a neat escape."

"It was indeed. No trouble for years."

"And the man who returns such a convict will be rated good?"

"Certainly."

"Well, if the man who returns him wishes a posish on the detective force at head-quarters, what then?" he asked, significantly.

"Well, it would be a good card for him," replied the commissioner.

"But how would it count?"

"Who are you?"

"That don't matter. How would it count in my favor if I return him?"

"As I said before, it would be a good card."

"And I get a hundred dollars besides?"

"Yes."

"You shall have the boy."

"All right. Bring him to me."

"I will."

With this understanding the would-be detective and the commissioner parted.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE SECRET CAVERN.

ON the occasion of Billy's first visit to Staten Island he acted very cautiously. Landing at Stapleton, he followed the directions set down in his mother's diary, and found no difficulty in placing the locality of the cave.

But the sensation overcame him, and without following any further that day, he returned to the city and wrote the letter to Tilly, which we have read a short distance back.

The next day he again visited the locality of the cave. Sitting down under a tree he tried to collect his thoughts, and to realize the situation. He thought of his poor mother in her unmarked grave, and he almost chided himself for not visiting it before he attempted to find the hidden treasure.

It was well for him that he did not, for sharp eyes were watching for him in that direction.

As he sat there he seemed to have grown old. The experiences of the past few weeks had transformed him from a wild and rollicking boy, almost to a thoughtful man, almost prematurely old. And while he sat there communing with himself, the question arose in his mind whether he did not wish he was back again in his old position of Billy the Bootblack.

Under ordinary circumstances he would devoutly have wished so, but after learning what he had, and after promising his mother so faithfully, he felt that he must press on and avenge her terrible wrongs.

"What am I fooling around here for?" he asked himself, starting up from his seat.

He gazed earnestly in every direction. No one was in sight. From where he stood he could see the bay and the ships that were coming and going, and beyond forts Hamilton and Lafayette

and the southern end of Long Island greeted his eyes.

Why not solve the strange problem at once and set everything to rest?

But what then? Was he not a fugitive from justice—an escaped convict? If he were taken would he not be returned to his old quarters again?

"Never," said he, clenching his fists; "I will never be taken back to the Island alive; I never did anything to be taken there for, and I will not be taken back, if I can help it."

Taking another long look around him and seeing no one, he started once more towards the mysterious cave to which the diagram directed him.

He reached the mouth of it with considerable difficulty, for he had to cross a deep ravine overgrown with briars and brambles, blocked with huge rough pieces of stone, and altogether presenting the most wild and uninviting approach that he had ever seen.

His heart almost failed him, for he began to doubt, for the first time, what his mother, if such she was, told him. How could a woman ever penetrate such a place as this? He almost shrunk from undertaking it himself; how could she have accomplished it? Was it not a wild goose chase after all?

He paused a moment in the ravine and gazed at the surroundings. He was on the point of turning back and giving the thing up as preposterous.

"But why not be satisfied?" he mused. "There is the cave just as she described it to me—just as it is drawn here in the book; I will make a thorough search and be satisfied," he added.

Leaping down from the rock on which he stood, he pushed aside some closely-grown vines that laced up the way.

Stooping down he managed to creep under them, and found himself beyond the first barrier.

But worse ones confronted him.

He gazed around on the bewildering meshes of rocks and vines.

Rank grass grew on every side, and a little rivulet trickled lazily among the stones.

Poison vines choked the path, and no signs of a cave greeted his anxious gaze.

A curious noise startled him, and turning, he saw a huge rattlesnake within five feet of where he stood.

It was the first snake he had ever seen outside of a show, but he had read of them, and he knew he was in great danger.

But danger was just the thing to rouse him.

He felt even glad that something was there to break the dull and ghostly monotony of the place. Now there was something to rouse him to action.

Cautiously retreating a few steps, he secured a thick stick about three feet in length, and then returned to where the snake lay coiled, ready for a spring, and hissing vindictively.

Billy did not lose his presence of mind for a moment, although he was greatly excited, as he or any one naturally would be under the circumstances.

Poising himself carefully, he aimed a blow at the raised head of the snake, and killed it as a young Hercules might have done.

But one blow did not satisfy the now thoroughly aroused hero, and he dealt it several until the wriggling, loathsome body lay still in death. Then he stretched the reptile out at full length, and found that it was nearly two yards long.

After waiting a few moments, he penetrated still another gate of vines and weeds and found himself in a small open space, although the bushes and vines grew down from the overhanging stones and almost filled the ravine.

Beyond this there was a still clearer space, and here he encountered two more rattlesnakes, both of which raised their heads and hissed at the intruder upon their seclusion, while the male poised itself for a spring at its intended victim.

But Billy was on the alert, and his club soon knocked the head off of the most dangerous one, while several rattles around him showed that he had got into a regular nest of rattlesnakes.

There was that about our hero which made him different from most boys or men even; the greater the danger the greater the courage it inspired him with, and when he found himself in this position he leaped upon a boulder and waited for the attack.

But he did not have long to wait.

One after another wriggled through the weeds and underbrush, and approached him with heads erect.

Some of them dodged the blows that he aimed at their heads, but he maintained his position, and he fought them bravely until he left ten of the



vile monsters lying stretched out or coiled up in the shrubby dead or dying.

He beat about with his club to see if he could start up any more, but to appearances they were all slain.

This was even a more surprising battle than he had ever read of, and he stood there panting and wondering what would come next.

When he had rested himself sufficiently he got down from the rock and began to penetrate further into the mysterious, loathsome place.

A few more bushes and interlaces met with and overcome and he stood before a small opening which might lead into a cave. Here he paused and took his bearings. How could a woman ever have entered this dreadful place?

But it was no time to question now. Thus far he had overcome all obstacles, and his spirit being roused he was in no humor to turn back or speculate upon what had been; what might be or what now claimed his whole heart and attention.

He had provided himself with a candle and matches, but before going into this dark hole, which might indeed be a nest of reptiles, he stopped and once more consulted his chart.

There it was, everything was marked down as plainly as could be, and after studying it for a few moments he lighted his candle and started to enter the cave.

Stepping over a high stone which seemed to guard the entrance, he listened with his ear to the opening. But nothing save the trickle of the lazy rivulet was heard.

After creeping along for a few yards he paused to see his surroundings. The place was not very large, but it was cold, dark and dismal. A shudder crept over him as he gazed around.

Again consulting the diagram, again he saw the exact spot indicated, and approached it. A large flat stone lay up against the side of the cave. According to the diagram the treasure was hidden behind this rock.

He placed his candle on a jutting piece of ledge and then seized the stone with both hands, and by a great effort pulled it away, thinking as he did so, how could a woman place it thus?

After the stone had been tumbled away he took the candle and held it into the small opening that seemed to be in the side of the cave.

The light fell upon a large tin box.

Strong as he was and resolute, Billy fell back overcome with emotion. After all it was not a myth, it was not the dream or fancy of a maniac.

It was some moments before he could recover his strength and senses sufficiently to look again into the mystic opening in the wall. The romance he was then experiencing was far more vivid than any he had ever read. His limbs trembled, and he felt that he was laboring in a dream.

Then he reached in and took hold of the handle of the box. He attempted to raise it, but its weight, and the mold which so many years had fastened upon it, prevented him from doing so.

Three times he attempted it, and at length the cover broke from the box and he pulled it out, at the same time producing a metallic noise which startled him like a voice from the dead.

After waiting a few moments, during which his heart beat wildly, he took the candle and held it into the opening. The sight which met his gaze was enough to set a man of the world wild with excitement, much less an inexperienced boy.

The large box was filled with twenty and fifty dollar gold pieces, and, notwithstanding the long time they had been hidden, they were still bright and yellow, and reflected the light of the candle in a bewildering flood.

Billy thrust his hand into the mass and drew forth a dozen of the little fortunes. His eyes nearly leaped from their sockets as he held the shiners up to the candle to inspect them.

"She was my mother, and she has told me true," he murmured. "And God forgive me for ever doubting her," he added.

He looked out as though to make sure that he was not seen by some one. Then taking out a few hands full of the gold pieces, he lifted the stone back again into its place and left the cave.

With almost as much difficulty as at first he worked his way out of the ravine, and did not pause until he had reached the high table land that overlooked the bay.

"Now what?" he asked, as he struggled nervously to a seat on a stone. "I am rich with even these few pieces, what shall I do next? Return to New York and get them changed for greenbacks? Yes, that is the best way. My dress will enable me to pass for an English sailor, and they will not be surprised to see me with gold. Yes, I'll go back to the city."

Having made up his mind what to do, he started towards the ferry landing, and took the next boat back to New York.

## CHAPTER IX.

## "BILLY THE BOOTBLACK" NO LONGER.

THE next day Billy left his humble lodgings and in a roundabout way reached Wall street, where he offered his gold for exchange.

The broker counted the gold, and found there was twelve hundred and fifty dollars of it.

Then he looked at Billy inquiringly.

"Whose is this?" he asked at length.

"Mine," replied Billy.

"Where did you get it?"

"I earned it honestly, sir."

"Who are you?"

"Claud Barnwell."

"What is your business?"

"A sailor."

"Oh, just got paid off, eh? Well, that is all right. What do you want for it?"

"Greenbacks."

"Large or small denominations?"

"Some of both."

The broker figured up the premium on gold according to the market rate, and said:

"That will be exactly fifteen hundred dollars."

"All right," replied Billy, with a sigh of relief.

The money was counted out to him, and he placed it in a large envelope and left the office.

The transaction had excited him somewhat, but after having experienced so much the previous day, he was more thoroughly braced up for what had come upon him now.

His first move was to buy a large pocket-book, in which to keep his money, and then a smaller one for ready change or small bills.

His next move was to buy him a handsome suit of clothes, and ordered them sent to the Astor House, where he went himself and engaged a room.

In the course of two hours, with a bath, clean linen, new boots, and a fashionable suit of clothes, our friend Billy viewed himself in a full length mirror and did not know the shadow.

"How is that for high?" he asked, as he whirled around and presented himself in different views.

"Now I can go out without fear. Nobody in the world would know me in this harness. Hi, what would the boys say if they see me now? What would Tilly say? But I must be careful and not give myself away," and he drew down his face into a sober, dignified look. "There, that will do. Now I'll go out and take a prom."

Walking leisurely from the hotel with a cane and cigar, it would indeed have been a keen observer who could recognize him as rollicking Billy, the Bootblack.

In order to test his disguise he first accustomed himself to it by walking around for an hour or so, and then he went over to his old stand on the corner of Beekman and Nassau streets to see the boys.

"Black 'em up? Shine 'em, boss?" asked half a dozen voices, among which was that of little Tommy Mack, Billy's old-time partner in business.

Billy halted, and looked from one to another. They did not recognize him.

"Put 'em right up here. I'll shine 'em up for five cents," said Tommy.

"Oh, you retire to the dustriutum of seclusion. When a gentleman comes along I'm his man," said Frank Birch, the vender of big words.

"You git! I'll take this little fellow," said Billy, pointing to Tommy.

"All right, sir, but it's evident you arn't used to good society," said Frank, as he turned away.

Billy watched his old friends with a happy heart as he beheld them again all well and in good spirits, and while Tommy was putting a shine on his new boots his eyes wandered over to the opposite corner, where Tilly O'Neal sat before her news-stand.

The change in her was almost equal to that in himself. He hardly knew her, so much more sedate and lady-like had she become. She was dressed clean and neat, and was attentively reading a story in the Boys' WEEKLY.

"There you are, sir," said Tommy, as he finished the job.

"That's good. How much have you made today?" he asked, pleasantly.

"Only fifty cents."

"Well, here's something to make it up," said Billy, handing him a five-dollar bill.

"Jumpin' Moses!" exclaimed Tommy, starting back in wonder.

"What is it?" asked several of the boys.

"A fiver."

"To change?"

"No, I give it to him. And here's another fiver to divide among you fellows," said Billy.

"Golly, what a swell. I say, Tim," said one, "I'll bet he's rich."

"Bust a bank; more like. Whew! but arn't he a swell! Look at that harness!" said another.

"Here you are, boys, and good luck to you," added Billy, handing one of them the bill, and starting over to where Tilly sat.

The boys gazed at each other in surprise.

"Who is he?" they asked each other.

Tilly looked up as he approached. At a glance he saw that she did not recognize him.

He bought an afternoon paper and handed her a five-dollar bill.

"I can't change it, sir," she said.

"You can't? Well, here is another," he said, handing her a ten-dollar note.

She regarded him with wonder, and as if undecided whether the offer was made in sport or to annoy her.

"Keep them both. They were sent you by Billy, the Bootblack."

"Billy!" she exclaimed, starting up.

"Yes. He still loves you, and told me to tell you that he will see you before long."

The poor girl was speechless.

"Have you any message to send him?"

"Yes, yes—I—"

"Shall I tell him that you still remember and love him?"

"Yes—he knows that," she stammered, blushing like a rose.

"And shall I tell him that you will continue to love him until he sees you again?"

"Yes, yes, tell him that," she replied, casting her eyes on the ground.

"Then I shall make him ever so happy. Here is another ten-dollar bill; take it from him, for he has a plenty of them now and will never see you want. Good-bye!" and before she could reply he had turned and walked briskly down Nassau street.

After walking around for a short time and taking a calm look at Mr. Barnwell's office, together with the place where he had met Ponsby, he set his teeth firmly together and started for the Astor House.

That night he visited Wallack's Theater and enjoyed other luxuries that he had so often coveted, but after he returned to his room he gave himself up to sober thought regarding the future.

In what way should he possess himself of the gold remaining in the cave and not excite suspicion?

The next morning he ordered a carriage and rode over to Greenwood Cemetery. Going to the clerk he was shown the locality of his mother's grave. On it he knelt and renewed his vows of revenge.

His next move was to visit a marble-yard in the neighborhood, where he ordered a beautiful monument to be placed upon the grave, giving the name of "Barbara Barnwell, wife of William Barnwell," together with the particulars of her death, and last in the inscription were these words:

*"Erected by her son Claud, to whom she was united by the will of Providence just before her death."*

This he composed and made up by the help of the architect employed by the yard, and after paying a good deposit on it he left.

The same day he inclosed one hundred dollars to Dr. Bird, at Blackwell's Island, and wrote him the following note:

"Dear Sir: This makes us even in all but gratitude; that debt I can never pay. I have found things just as my mother told me I should. I am no longer a poor bootblack. My escape you have heard of, of course. I did it alone, no one helped me. Some time I will see you. Until then believe me, kind sir, yours truly,

"BILLY."

His obligations of kindness were now all discharged. One thing more and he would be ready to start a new life. He wrote a note to Tilly, inclosing twenty-five dollars, and asking her to buy with it such clothes as she needed, and still remember her friend Billy.

The next day he went down to the Battery and sat down on one of the benches for the purpose of collecting his thoughts regarding the gold which still remained hidden in the cave.

All at once the thought flashed on his mind, "Why not buy a yacht?"

The idea seemed to him to be a good one. With such a craft he could not only avoid arrest and suspicion, but he could manage to take the remaining treasures on board of it without fear of detection.

So he began to look around and make inquiries. At length he found an old man who owned a beautiful, fast-sailing, sloop-rigged yacht that he was anxious to sell. He had bought it when he was in prosperity, and now he was not able to keep it, and would sell it for half its value for cash.

Billy went on board, and the owner sailed him around for an hour or two. The craft proved to be all that the owner had claimed it to be, and after making a bargain with the old man to remain in charge of it and take him wherever he wished



to go, at so much per month, Billy bought the little craft and became himself a little lord of the wave.

Billy had become a man in feeling. Nearly all of the boy had been purged away by misfortune and trouble, and he was not only enabled to pass for the son of a rich Englishman, but his cool, sharp, and deliberate manner inspired both confidence and respect. At sixteen he appeared a man, and being very sharp and smart naturally, he picked up information and knowledge much faster than ordinary boys would have done.

The yacht was stored with everything that was required for comfort, the captain taking the entire charge of those matters, and when all was ready, Billy directed him to go to Tommy Mack and engage him for a cabin-boy.

The little fellow was reluctant at first, but when he went on board and found his benefactor, then he resolved to go and learn to be a sailor.

Captain Munson, one sailor, together with Billy and Tommy, made up the entire crew of the *Billow*, the name of the yacht.

Billy in the meantime had provided himself with several other suits of clothes, together with a jaunty yachtsman's uniform, and after having sundry repairs made on the *Billow* she was ready for a cruise, and as fine a looking craft as rode the waters of New York Bay.

Tommy Mack was delighted with his new sailor-boy's uniform, and although in ignorance of who his young commander was, he saw a jolly life before him, and concluded that boot-blackening might go to the dogs.

About a week after the purchase of the *Billow* the little craft set sail one beautiful afternoon and stood gracefully down the bay.

Billy, or, as he was now known, Claud Barnwell, was calm and reticent.

The weight upon his mind, the newness of the situation, had made him cold and unlike the boy we have hitherto known him, and more like a determined man.

The yacht bore away toward Staten Island.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE MYSTERIOUS MIDNIGHT LANDING.

THE *Billow* cruised around all that afternoon, and when night came, Billy—or Claud Barnwell—ordered the sailing-master to drop anchor in front of Stapleton.

Taking Tommy with him, he had the sailors row them ashore, and wait for them until they should return.

Claud did this for the purpose of throwing all hands off their guard, and to make them believe that he had business and acquaintances in Stapleton, which occasionally took him there.

For three days he cruised around the bay, and anchored off Stapleton, quite near to the shore, and every night he would take Tommy, and have the sailors row them ashore in the jolly-boat.

Once ashore, he would walk around on the pretense of stretching his legs, and after an hour or so he would return to the yacht.

On the fourth day they anchored as before, and Claud dressed himself in a sailor's garb and came on deck, and enjoyed the beautiful evening in listening to Captain Munson's yarns of yachting life, although he was very careful not to betray himself in any particular.

The bluff old captain tried to draw him out, for, in truth, he had become a very great mystery to him. But the endeavor was fruitless, for our hero was guarded and uncommunicative.

And yet, he still retained the faculty of making friends, and, while listening attentively to the quaint entertainment which the old man offered, he retained the respect and admiration of all, without even trying to do so.

He would laugh sometimes, and manifest keen interest; but he never volunteered to tell any of his own experience, or that of any other person.

Captain Munson gradually came to regard him as the son of some wealthy man who had escaped to this country for some purpose or other, and was spending his money in this way because it was agreeable to him. But there was some mystery connected with the handsome youth, he felt quite certain; and yet, being a plain, honest man himself, he pried but little into the affairs of others, especially when he had so good a berth as he now held.

Tommy Mack was an entertaining little fellow, and would dance and sing the songs that were popular, or that he had learned at the Grand Duke Theater (the bootblacks' and news-boys' theater), and thus a very fair entertainment was afforded.

The evening passed pleasantly until near midnight, when Claud suddenly started up.

"This is Thursday, is it not?" he asked.

"It is, sir!" replied Captain Munson.

"I came near forgetting something, Jack; got

the jolly-boat alongside. I must go ashore and bring something that I want."

"Aye, aye, sir," replied the sailor, starting to obey the order.

"You can turn in, Captain Munson. I will take Tommy with me, and be back again before long. Come, Tommy, my lad," he said, turning to the cabin boy.

"All right, sir, I'm wid ye," replied Tommy.

Captain Munson watched the boat until it landed on the beach and then turned away to seek his quarters.

"I wonder what the mystery is about the young man?" he muttered. "There is something strange if not wrong. He is not acting himself, as I can see when a jolly story is being told. But I suppose I shall find out all about it some day. Howsoever he is a splendid little fellow, and I'll stick to him like a father."

"Have you got the canvas bag, Tommy?" asked Claud, as they walked up the beach.

"Yes, sir, here it is."

"Are you pretty strong?"

"Well, so, so."

"I've got a heavy load to take on board."

"I'll do my level best," said Tommy.

"And can you keep a secret?"

"I guess so, but I never seed one."

"I mean can you keep mum?"

"Oh, you bet."

"Well, the reason I ask you is because I don't want anybody to know my business. See?"

"All right, I'm mum."

"I've got something hidden up here in a cave, and I want to take it on board without Captain Munson or Jack knowing anything about it. Do you see the point?"

"Oh, sure, I'm wid yer."

"Then that is all right. Come this way."

The boys walked along the beach a few rods, and then went up upon the bank. Pausing a moment to get his bearings, Claud led the way across a field in the direction of the cave.

Everything was still; the village lights were out, and the moon alone threw her brightness upon the silent landscape.

Creeping cautiously along without speaking, Claud led the way down into the tangled ravine.

Reaching the spot where he had encountered the rattlesnakes he stopped to light his lantern, and bidding Tommy wait until he called him, he forced his way through the interlacing vines and entered the mysterious cave.

Claud had taken the canvas bag with him, and was fully prepared in every respect.

Moving cautiously, glancing back every moment to see if Tommy was watching or following, our hero crept along until he reached the place where his gold was hidden.

What if it was not there?

What if he had been followed and his secret learned?

This idea crept over him, not for the first time, but with greater force than ever before, now that his hand was within reach of it.

Cautiously he approached the hiding-stone, and with trembling hands removed it from its place.

If other hands had moved it since his, they had left no trace behind. Everything was the same as then.

He lifted the rock aside and thrust his arm into the opening.

His hand sunk deep into the golden eagles! No one had learned his yellow secret!

Drawing the stout canvas bag close to the niche he proceeded to transfer the rich golden eagles from their long and moldy resting place, handful after handful.

He was ten or fifteen minutes doing this, for the box was deep and long, and after he had transferred them all he held the candle inside the niche to see if anything else remained.

There was nothing there but the remains of the rust-eaten tin box that crumbled to pieces at a touch almost.

He drew the mouth of the bag together, and attempted to lift it.

It was more than he could do.

How had his mother managed to secrete it there?

He paused a moment, and called to mind the wording of the narrative as he found it in his diary. She had taken it to this hiding-place at different times!

That explains the mystery.

After reflecting a moment he called Tommy.

"Bear a hand here, Tommy."

"Aye, aye, sir," and the little fellow burst through the intervening foliage and stood at his side.

"Got something here that is pretty heavy."

"All right, sir, I'm hunkey on a lift," replied the little fellow, spitting on his hands.

The bag had a strong lock on it, which Claud

had taken the precaution to close and place the key in his pocket.

"Take one of the handles, Tommy."

"Aye, aye, sir; gracious! but it's heavy."

"Well, yes, just a little."

"A little! I wish it was gold that made it so heavy, that's all," replied the little fellow.

"Could you lift any more if you knew it was gold?" asked Claud.

"Yes, sir. Do you know, I've often looked in the windows of them money brokers, as they call 'em, and I've thought I could lift a thousand pounds of the gold and silver I've seen there?"

"Well, all right. This is nearly as valuable as what you have seen in those windows, so give us all your strength."

Tommy lifted as much as he could and so did Claud, and it was all they both could do to move the bag from its place and take it outside the cave.

Once on the level ground they stopped to rest. It was all a mystery to the boy Tommy, but to Claud, it was a golden reality.

A few rods at a time they went, and then set down their burden for a rest.

It was past midnight when they reached the boat—that was in waiting, and it took the combined efforts of Claud, Tommy, and the sailor, Jack, to lift it into the boat.

"Lead is very heavy," said Claud, as Jack stood gazing at the heavy bag.

"You are right, sir," replied the sailor, springing in and taking the oars.

Scarcely a word was spoken as Jack shoved the boat from the shore and rowed back to the yacht, some hundred yards away.

Arriving alongside, a tackle and pull was brought to bear, and the mysterious bag was lifted on board, after which the boat was hoisted into the davits astern, and the bag was taken to Claud's state-room.

Then Tommy and Jack were sent to their quarters. Claud was left alone with his fortune in his state-room.

Captain Munson had not been awakened, and in an hour afterwards all but the young owner of the yacht was fast asleep, and unmindful of what had transpired.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### A LIFE ON THE OCEAN WAVE.

THE next day Claud was on deck in good time, and from his appearance no one would suspect that anything of importance had taken place with him. He was dressed in his best, and a finer-looking yachtsman never trod the deck of a gallant craft.

Breakfast was served on deck, and Claud seemed to be in better spirits than he had been in for some time.

After it was over, and Tommy had cleared away the deck, Captain Munson spoke:

"Whither bound to-day, sir?"

"Well, we will cruise around and bring up at New York to-night. I have business there, and after it is through with then we will sail up and down the coast in search for adventures."

"Good enough!"

"You know all the coast?"

"Every inch from Maine to Texas."

"Then that is all right."

This being arranged, Claud, the next day, took all his gold ashore, changed it for greenbacks, and deposited it with Duncan, Sherman & Co., who from that time forward became his bankers, and regarded him as one of the richest of their depositors.

The next day Tilly O'Neil received the following letter:

"NEW YORK, Wednesday.

"DEAR TILLY:—The bearer of this is authorized to provide for you as I think it best, and I trust you will not object. I am to-day a rich man, so rich that you would not believe it if I was to tell you how much, I can hardly believe it myself. But I love you just the same, and always shall. Please follow the instructions of Mr. Brown and you will never regret it. I am going on a long journey, but you shall hear from me often, keep what I have told you a secret.

"From your friend, BILLY."

She was greatly surprised at receiving such a letter, but Mr. Brown was one of the agents of Duncan, Sherman & Co., and Claud had employed him to look after Tilly and her mother, and see that they lacked nothing their comfort or independence demanded.

He was a kind-hearted man and soon gained her confidence, after which it was arranged that she was to give up her news-stand and attend school. He also provided them with comfortable apartments in a cleaner and healthier part of the city, and also a physician under whose care Mrs. O'Neil soon regained her health and strength.



But the mystery attending it all, the novelty of having all bills paid by a sober old fellow who had nothing to communicate and no questions to ask, save those which pertained to the business that he was the agent for, made life seem so unlike what it had been to either of them before.

And their old acquaintances! Why some of them actually consulted fortune-tellers in hope of finding out the secret of the wonderful change that had come over the fortunes of the O'Neils.

But Tilly and her mother kept their own counsel, and lived the even tenor of their way, while she applied herself with untiring diligence to the task of educating herself. It was all strange to her, but there was something in her nature which grasped it as though fortune had intended her for a higher sphere than fate had doomed her to.

\* \* \* \* \*

After arranging everything satisfactorily Claud Barnwell made preparations for a cruise along the Atlantic coast. In the first place he engaged an old man as a teacher, a man who was not only versed in book learning, but in the ways of the world as well, and it was understood that he was to complete his education as they cruised around, and fit him for the world that lay before him.

The yacht *Billow* was stored with everything that brain and stomach could wish, and when all was in readiness they sailed swiftly down the New York Bay, and started for adventures.

There was what yachtsmen call a "spanking breeze," and the gallant little *Billow* caught her share of it in her broad, white wings and showed a clean stern to all crafts going in the same direction. She was eminently a thorough-going seaworthy craft, having been built under the eye of Captain Munson, especially for rough weather outside New York harbor.

Claud Barnwell had always been anxious to visit places of interest on the Atlantic coast, and in some of his dreams, ere his good fortune came upon him, he would imagine himself the master of a yacht sailing down the coast, even to the Gulf of Mexico, through the Caribbean Sea, to the West India Islands, down the coast of South America, around Cape Horn, up on the Pacific coast to all points of interest, and then take a cut across the continent, becoming familiar with all the grandeur of landscape he had heard and read so much about, and when this was completed, to go to Europe and see the sights that tourists value so much.

Those were day-dreams. He was now in a position to gratify his every wish and fulfill every dream. Wealth was his, and the world was before him.

Would his dream be realized!

Captain Munson loved the beautiful yacht, and now with a full sheet and a flowing sea before him his heart beat with pride, and he handled her as only an experienced sailor can handle one of those toy ships. Tommy Mack had become fascinated with his new life, and now that the prospect for visiting what seemed to him to be foreign countries was about to be realized, his delight knew no bounds.

Mr. Winsome, the old teacher whom Claud had engaged as his instructor and companion, was a man well acquainted not only with thousands of localities along the coast, but he also knew much of their history, and the prospects of an enjoyable voyage were very flattering.

"Where away first, sir?" asked Captain Munson, touching his hat to our hero.

"Long Branch," replied Claud.

"Yes, the season is at its height there now," said Mr. Winsome.

"Yes, put in there and anchor, and we will take a round of the hotels, and see what is going on."

This being understood, all hands gave themselves up to the enjoyment and contemplation of the beautiful scenery composing the harbor and bay of New York. Mr. Winsome acted as guide to Claud, and pointed out all the objects of interest, and gave some history or legend connected with dozens of places that he had scarcely heard of before.

They were sailing along past Staten Island. Beautiful farms, private residences, thrifty settlements, and evidences of high cultivation greeted the eye in every direction, looking towards the island, and scenes of equal beauty and interest lay extended to the left, on the Long Island shore.

Fort Lafayette, standing alone and dismantled in the Narrows above it; Fort Hamilton, with its dogs of war crouching sullenly on the parapets and in the frowning casements, waiting but for the word that should let them slip upon the enemies of our country. On the opposite (Staten Island shore), Fort Wordsworth, grim, silent and dreadful, these came abreast and under discussion, and then they stood towards Quarantine,

where dozens of ships and steamers lay at anchor, waiting permission to go to the city.

Then the waters began to widen, and Sandy Hook came in view.

The wind was still blowing fresh, and the little *Billow* flew from white-cap to white-cap, like a thing of life.

Several of the yachts belonging to the New York Yacht Club were cruising around in this locality, like beautiful dolphins sporting in the brine. And when the *Idler* tacked and came upon the *Billow's* course, Captain Munson accepted the implied challenge, and for the next fifteen minutes the two yachts contended for the mastery.

But the *Billow* had often contended with this celebrated yacht before, and, as usual, did not fail on this occasion to exhibit her keel in the most gallant and graceful style.

Claud and those on board were fairly wild with delight.

It was nearly sunset when the *Billow* sailed up before Long Branch. The wind had been blowing all day long from the west, and consequently there was scarcely any surf.

Captain Munson, who had often gone ashore on this beach, at once made preparations to land Claud and Tommy, whom he had selected for his companions ashore.

Tommy was as handsome as a picture in his little sailor-dress, and a bigger-feeling boy it would be hard to find anywhere.

Captain Munson rowed them ashore in safety, and Claud dismissed him with instructions to return for them at nine o'clock the next morning.

Then the two boys started up the bank, and reaching the table-land some seventy-five or eighty feet above the level of the sea, a scene of beauty and grandeur greeted their eyes.

The lamps were just being lighted; the drivers were all alive with magnificent turnouts; the promenades thick with the devotees of fashion; grave and gay, lovely and homely; genuine and make-believers, forming a scene of enchantment that is nowhere to be found but in a favorite resort like Long Branch.

Going across Ocean Avenue, Claud led the way up to the Mansion House and there engaged rooms for the night.

They had already partaken of supper aboard the *Billow*, and after making arrangements for rooms, they each lighted a cigar and started out for a promenade.

Wasn't Tommy in high glee though.

"What would 'Dictionary' and the other fellows say if they could see me now? Oh, I guess not!" he added, thrusting his hands in his jacket pockets, and tipping his smoker up so that the lighted end nearly touched his jaunty hat.

"You appear to be happy, Tommy," said Claud, observing the comical strut of his smaller companion.

"Mi I—I feels like a hungry dog wid a big chunk of liver. Don't catch me blacking boots any more, you bet!" replied Tommy.

"Black yer boots!" cried a voice close at hand.

"Hey! What's that?" he exclaimed.

"Black yer boots?" asked a boy, coming from a seat where he had posted himself for work.

"Why, shiver my timbers; it's Micky Shay!" exclaimed Tommy.

"So it is," said Claud, almost forgetting himself.

"Do you know Micky?" asked Tommy, anxiously.

"Well, I heard you speaking about him," said he, getting out of it as quickly as he could.

"Hello, Micky! How ye was?" asked Tommy.

"Hey? Who be—why bust my box, if it isn't Tommy Mack!" exclaimed the bootblack.

"Why, in course it is. What yer doin' here?"

"Shinin'. What you doin'?"

"Sailorin'. Don't yer see this harness?" he asked, whirling around on one foot.

"Wal, wal, bust my blackin'-box!" said Micky, gazing at the little sailor from head to foot.

"Come, give me a shine," said Claud, going to a seat.

"I say, Tommy, who is the swell cove you is wid?" he asked, aside.

"That? Why he is my captain; boss of the *Billow*, lying out there. See?"

"Wal, I'm blowed," said he, kneeling down to commence work on Claud's boots.

When the job was through with Tommy also came in for a shine, and he was particular in having a good one, after which Claud gave him a dollar, and with Tommy continued his promenade.

It was nearly ten o'clock when they returned to the Mansion House.

They had visited nearly all of the hotels along the shore, and indulged in any quantity of sight-seeing on all sides.

But the beauty and fun of the day was now about being started.

Delightful music swelled in intoxicating volumes; beautiful women and attentive cavaliers paraded the long stretch of piazza, and dancing had commenced in the parlors.

Neither of the boys had seen such a dazzling sight before.

Claud, as Billy the Bootblack, had seen dances in Baxter, James, and Water streets, but nothing that could in any way compare with the beauty and gorgeousness of this festal night.

They stationed themselves by one of the open windows and watched the fairies of wealth and fashion, as, with their strutting cavaliers, they promenaded or waltzed around the spacious room to the intoxicating measure of the bewitching music.

"By gosh! wouldn't I like ter know such nice shindigs as them?" said Tommy.

"Perhaps you may some day, Tommy," said Claud.

"Look at that girl," said he, pointing to a little fairy elf who was waltzing with another girl. "Oh, rub me with a corn broom—but wouldn't I like to play hop-sotch with her if I only know'd how. I don't think it's just hunkey ter see two gals a huggin' an' dancin' that way; it somehow makes a chap feel lonesome."

Claud laughed at the sentiment which had so suddenly awakened in the little fellow's breast.

They turned away soon after and joined in the throng that were walking up and down on the piazza.

Claud, as dressed in his superbly-fitting yachtsman's costume, attracted much attention.

He walked erect and manly, and a handsomer specimen of haughty Young America was never seen at Long Branch. There was something about the youth which told of his being born to command. The wealth now at his disposal befitted him well, and numerous were the inquiries set afloat as to who and what he was.

Little Tommy Mack acted the part of servant and companion admirably. He almost worshiped his young commander, and still without knowing who he really was, he regarded him as a superior personage who had taken a liking to him.

It was not long before it began to be whispered round that Claud was a young nobleman, whose yacht lay off the shore, and who had visited the place simply to see what was to be seen.

This rumor brought hundreds around them as they continued their march up and down, and many were the coquettish eyes that greeted Claud's as he passed along among the promenaders. But he remembered a pair of bright blue eyes which surpassed them all in beauty, and still maintained his cold exterior; he appeared not to notice or be aware of the interest he had occasioned.

It was nearly midnight, and the two boys at length wandered away down to the bluff where the summer houses are. The night was exceedingly beautiful, and the full moon made everything bright on land and touched the waters beyond with flecks and sprays of silver.

A large number of persons were abroad, either walking up and down the shore, or lounging in the summer-houses, dreaming, plotting, or talking nonsense.

The music from the different hotels still floated out on the balmy air, and bright lights flashed from many a window, behind whose curtains shone brighter eyes.

Tommy was greatly taken up with the shore and the extended ocean, and while he walked further on to enjoy the beauties, Claud seated himself just outside the summer-house to rest and to meditate.

There were voices within, but they did not attract or disturb him. What were they or their owners to him or his future?

Presently a man's voice rose higher than before, and Claud started from his feet. Where had he heard that voice before?

"Why will you longer distrust me, Maude?" said the pleader. "Have I not followed and loved you for three years?"

"True—but you have a wife," said a gentle voice in response.

"Say not that; say rather that your superb beauty has won me from a woman I thought I loved before I met with you."

"And you wish me to forsake home, friends, all, and fly with you to Europe?"

"Yes. Only say that you will do so and I will turn my ample fortune into gold, and we shall leave this half of the world and live hereafter in a realm of bliss."

A moment's silence followed.

"Why will you hesitate and torment methus?"

"Because something whispers continually in my heart that it is not right; that misery and sorrow will surely follow me."



"Never. If you love me as I love you, what may we not make life with abundant wealth."

Again there was a moment's silence. The summer-house was unlighted save by the moon, but yet that was sufficient to enable a person to distinguish a familiar face within.

"Will you fly with me, darling?"

"No, she will not," said Claud, suddenly presenting himself at the open door.

The lady screamed, and clung to her companion.

"Who are you, sir?" demanded the gentleman, starting up and confronting our hero.

"The son of the woman you cruelly murdered."

William Barnwell, for it was he, shrank back as though confronted by a specter from the grave.

"Be—begone, insolence!" he finally articulated.

"Beware of that wretch, lady, I know him, and he shall yet know me better than he does now," said Claud, stooping forward and addressing Barnwell's shrinking companion.

"Impudent devil!" hissed Barnwell, darting towards the door where Claud stood.

But the youth fled and was almost instantly lost in a throng of people that just then approached from the direction of the hotel.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### THE VOYAGE CONTINUED.

CLAUD BARNWELL managed his escape successfully, and soon after retired to his room.

"I will not remain long away from this," thought he, and plots for future action flooded through his mind.

William Barnwell's companion would not remain out longer after her warning and fright, and soon after he escorted her to the hotel. But he was further than ever away from the accomplishment of his purposes.

"What the devil does it mean?" he muttered between his teeth, as he visited the bar and poured out a tumbler of brandy.

"The son of the woman you cruelly murdered!" rang in his ears.

"Bah! It is only some one who may have heard something of my past life, and used it as a trick or joke upon me. But it has frightened her thoroughly. If I could only catch the wretch!"

The next day Claud was taken on board his yacht, and again the *Billow* spread her white wings and stood down the coast towards Cape May. But before going on board he posted a letter to Barnwell's wife, informing her of his designs.

The next day Barnwell met his companion of the night before, but she would not listen to anything further regarding the proposed elopement, and announced her intention of passing the remainder of the season at Cape May, whither she begged him not to follow her.

But he was infatuated, and instantly made secret preparations to take up his abode there also.

The gallant *Billow* stood jauntily up before the breeze, and fortune seemed borne on the winds which swelled her snowy sails.

There was plenty of wind, and in good time the gallant yacht bore in upon Cape May and anchored as gracefully as a swan might have nestled down to an evening's repose.

In the meantime Mr. Winsome had posted Claud regarding the place, and the young commander made up his mind to tarry awhile and see the sights, and hear the sounds emanating from this renowned watering-place.

"Here for a day or two," said he to Captain Munson, as the old sailor let go the anchor and the *Billow* swung around with the tide.

"All right, sir," replied the sailing-master.

"Let us go ashore and enjoy ourselves."

"And this is the place to do it," said Munson.

It was one of those delightful afternoons when quiet seems to dwell upon the water and a soothing hush upon the land.

The hotels and the cottages were full, and the overflowing spent itself in bathing, riding, promenading, courting and flirting.

Happiness seemed to reign over all.

Wealth lent its gilding to such a degree that Cape May seemed to be a very paradise.

A number of yachts belonging to the New York Yacht Club lay at anchor before the town, and the yachtsmen were scattered through the hotels, bent on enjoyment to its wildest degree.

Claud Barnwell took Captain Munson and Tommy ashore with him this time, leaving Mr. Winsome and the sailor Jack on board to keep the yacht until their return.

The *Billow* was anchored off the shore opposite the Stockton House, and to it they bent their way as they were rowed to land.

Claud engaged rooms at this beautiful house, and then they all three went out for sport, such as might be found.

And there was a plenty of it.

The visiting yachtsmen made it lively, and Captain Munson being acquainted with nearly all of them, found himself at home, and, of course, his youthful commander came in for a large share of attention from all hands.

But Claud Barnwell was not the youth to be carried away by the excess of those around him.

He joined with them to a certain extent, but he drank nothing stronger than lemonade, and still kept his eye upon all that transpired.

That evening the landlord gave a dinner to the visiting yachtsmen, and Claud was one among them.

He partially forgot for the time being the sorrow of his life, and became one among the jovial spirits who were gathered there.

Wine, speeches, and song filled up the hour, and then the company adjourned to the parlor, where a number of beautiful women were assembled to grace the occasion, and without formal proceedings all hands fell to, and, taking partners, they flow gracefully into the dance.

Captain Munson was quite as good a dancer as he was a skipper, and Claud watched him with serious eyes as he joined in the mazy dance.

Finally a beautiful lady, to whom he had been previously introduced, came up to Claud.

She had heard, as others had, that he was a runaway son of an English nobleman, but aside from that, she was drawn towards the handsome youth, and seeing that he stood apart, she resolved to draw him into the whirlpool of pleasure.

"Come," said she, "you must dance with me."

"Excuse me, I do not dance," said Claud.

"Oh, but I will show you how. Come."

"I am sure I will give you much trouble."

"Oh, no. This is a simple waltz. Come. You can surely catch the step," said she, taking him by the hand and leading him out upon the floor.

Claud had watched the step, and when she took him in hand, being a good dancer herself, he found but little trouble in getting into it, and before they had been around half a dozen times he mastered it and proved himself a good partner.

Of course he was delighted, and danced with her several times during the evening.

She was a middle aged lady of remarkable beauty and she was known at Cape May as one of the handsest and wealthiest women that graced the place with her presence.

Somehow or other she took a strange liking to Claud, and they became great friends before the evening's entertainment was over.

But while it was going on, William Barnwell came into the room. Leaning on his arm was a beautiful girl not more than twenty-five years of age. She appeared to be melancholy and cast down in spite of the gayety before and around her, and the moment Claud saw them he knew that she was the same one with whom he had seen him at Long Branch.

At that moment Tommy Mack came along, he had been enjoying himself hugely all the evening.

"Tommy, do you see that man and woman over there?" he asked, pointing them out.

"Yes, sir."

"Keep your eye on them and find out all you can about them on the sly, mind now, on the sly, understand."

"Oh, sure, I'll pipe 'em off," replied the lad.

"All right," said Claud, waving his hand away, for just at that moment Mrs. Wildemere, the lady who had been coaching him in dancing, came along and held out both her hands towards him.

"Come, Master Barnwell, here is another dance on the programme that I claim you for a polka." Claud took her hands and then she took his arm, and they marched to the dancing floor.

William Barnwell and his companion also danced, and Claud came upon him several times before the figure was ended.

"You must not go until I become better acquainted with you," said she, as Claud led her back to a seat after the dance.

"I am very poor company, madam," he said.

"Ah, but I can make you good company easily. You must become better acquainted with fashionable society."

"But I am not fitted for it," said he.

"I will vouch for you, and as they say in boating circles, I will coach you. Say you will be my guest for a few days."

"I fear I should trouble you too much."

"No. Give yourself to me; I like you and will make all amends and excuses. Do you promise?"

"Yes, anything to please you," he said.

"That is well. Here is my card and I shall expect you to-morrow at ten. Remember."

"I will."

"Good night, for I must leave you now."

"Good night."

As they parted Captain Munson approached.

"Shall we remain all night, sir?"

"Yes, several nights if we like."

"Good enough. I have good friends here, so have you."

"And the *Billow*?"

"She is in good hands, never fear."

"Well, make yourself happy, captain, and I will try to do the same. But stand ready, for I may take it into my head to up anchor and take a sudden start."

"Aye! aye! sir, I will keep a weather-eye on you. Give me the 'Billow-pipe' and I will be with you in a jiffy."

"All right," said Claud, and Captain Munson turned away to join his friends.

The "Billow-pipe" was a peculiar whistle that the captain had always clung to, and which was well understood now, and when given it would summon not only the crew but its friends at a given point almost instantaneously.

As Captain Munson left the young commander, Tommy Mack approached.

"Well, Tommy," said Claud.

"There they go," said he, pointing to one of the large windows, out of which Barnwell and his companion were just emerging.

"Have you been watching them?"

"Yes, sir."

"And did you hear anything they said?"

"He's chinning her fearfully, but somehow she won't have it," replied Tommy.

"All right. Keep your weather-eye out and your ear piped for the 'Billow-pipe'—see?"

"Yes, sir. I'm matches."

With this understanding they separated.

Claud turned from the now almost deserted ball-room floor and followed Barnwell out of doors.

Tommy walked leisurely along in the same direction.

Barnwell and his companion walked down to the sandy shore. The night was beautiful and many were bathing in the foaming surf.

Claud was smoking a cigar and walking close behind the guilty pair. They were conversing in whispers, but still the lady seemed reluctant and silent.

Finally they went to one of the bath houses; procuring bathing suits they plunged into the breakers.

Claud seated himself near at hand for a few moments, and then he went for a bathing suit, thinking he could see and hear more in this guise than in any other.

Robed for the briny, Claud plunged into the surf and sported for some time in the immediate vicinity of Barnwell and the lady in his company.

The two enjoyed the delightful surf for some time, but Claud was ever near them, listening with keen sense to all they said.

Finally the lady gave a scream.

"A shark, a shark has bitten me!"

Barnwell seized her round the waist as she floated upon the water.

"Courage, my dear," said he.

"Help, help," she cried.

"No, no; it cannot be. There is no danger!"

"Ah! help," she cried.

At that moment something touched Barnwell's foot, and forgetting everything else but personal safety, he left his charge and struck out for the shore.

"Help! help!" shouted the lady.

"Courage—I will protect you!" said Claud, lifting her to the surface, as she was about to sink from fright and exhaustion.

"But the shark?" screamed the lady.

"He shall not harm you. Come, let us reach the shore," he said, passing his arm around her waist.

At that moment Claud, for the first time, felt the presence of the marine monster. They were nearly two hundred feet from the shore, but his courage did not forsake him for an instant.

Surmising that the difficulty might arise, he had armed himself with a sharp bowie knife, and now he felt that it was his only friend.

By the light of the moon he could see the monster circling around them, watching for an opportunity to seize one of them in his terrible jaws.

"Courage!" he whispered.

"But the shark—the monster!"

"We will escape him, never fear," said Claud.

At that moment the dreadful monster swam up close to the lady, and was on the point of snapping at one of her arms, when Claud drew his knife, and dove down close beside the finny terror.

Seizing one of the fins, he plunged his sharp knife again and again into his slimy sides.

By this time a crowd had gathered on the shore, and the greatest excitement prevailed.

The struggle between Claud and the shark was of the most sensational nature, but being clumsy, and slow to turn, he managed to give him his death wound, and as he rolled over and gave up the ghost, Claud thrust his trusty knife deep into



his slimy sides, and began striking out for the shore with his prize.

By this time the imperiled lady had been reached by those on shore, and rescued from harm.

Five minutes later Claud grounded on the sand, and called upon those near at hand to assist him in landing the marine monster whom he had conquered unto death.

Ready hands were there, and in a few minutes the shark was drawn up upon the shore, still quivering, but entirely beyond all harm.

The crowd gathered and increased. It was one of the largest and most dangerous sharks that had ever been seen on the coast, and the excitement ran high. Claud was hailed as a hero of the brightest stripe.

William Barnwell stood upon the shore, and seeing his companion rescued safe and sound, he rushed into the surf to meet her.

"We are safe!" said he, taking her hands.

The poor girl fell swooning into his arms. But the swoon lasted only a moment. The cheers and excitement appeared to rally her, and just as the crowd were dragging the huge shark up on the beach, and applauding the youthful hero who had killed him, she opened her eyes and comprehended the situation.

"Maude, we are safe!" whispered Barnwell.

"Coward!" she hissed, as she tore herself from his embrace, and sprang towards Claud. "Brave youth, to you I owe my life!"

Claud was just in the mood at that moment to receive her, and as she flung herself upon his throbbing breast, he held her as a young giant might have done, while still receiving the homage of the gathering throng.

"Beware of William Barnwell," he whispered in her ear. "I warned you at Long Branch, and I warn you now; I know him for a wretch."

By this time a large number had gathered, and the youthful hero was sought on all sides.

"Shall I see you again?" asked the woman.

"Perhaps so; but at all events beware of the wretch who forsook you in the moment of danger."

"Thanks. I will remember your warning."

The rescued lady here broke from the crowd and retired to her bathing-house, closely followed by William Barnwell.

But from that moment her heart was dead to him, and the grounds on which she had hesitated before were all washed away and she was saved.

The crowd became greater, and hitching a hook into the jaw of the shark, twenty or thirty of them seized the rope and dragged the bleeding monster up in front of the Stockton House.

The brave exploit had already reached there, and when Claud appeared in his proper costume he was received with a wild ovation and hailed a hero of the first water; a youthful St. George, in fact.

Mrs. Wildemere and her friends were among the first to greet Claud, and a more wildly worshipped hero than he was never known in Cape May.

In the meantime the crowds gathered from the other hotels, and while measuring, commenting, explaining how he had been killed, there were not words found of sufficient strength to express the general admiration for our, and their hero, Claud Barnwell.

The whole place was in a blaze of excitement. Had the monster been taken in the ordinary way, or had he been killed by some boatman in broad daylight, it would not have occasioned anywhere near the excitement and interest that was aroused by its death and capture as it really occurred.

It was long past midnight before Claud could disengage himself from his admirers.

The lady whom he addressed was also with him a central figure in the reception, but William Barnwell stood aloof and frowned with malignant hate upon the handsome youth who received the honors that might have been his had he been possessed of the same courage.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE "BILLOW PIPE."

WILLIAM BARNWELL, the rich broker, retired from actual sight, chagrined and disgusted.

The girl he was so wholly engrossed in, whom he pretended to love, and was endeavoring to win, contrasted him so fiercely with the brave youth who had not only saved her life, but slain the monster even while his repulsive jaws were open for her destruction, that he could have crushed him in cowardly hate.

But had he known who the hero of the hour really was, he would have doubly hated him.

"Who is that fellow, I wonder?" he mused, as he walked away into the darkness. "The handsome rascal has not only eclipsed me and become a hero here, but he is her hero as well. And she

hates me, even called me a coward. Death! that the fates should use me so. But I will not relinquish her yet. She is too valuable a money prize to be relinquished, for, although she does not know it yet, she is worth half a million. And this makes me wild, to think that this boy, this sailor, should step between us thus. Curses on him. It would be just like a romantic girl to fall in love with the fellow, and then where am I? No, no, it shall not be, he must be swept out of the way," said he, as he strode along with clenched fist and hard set teeth.

"Mr. Barnwell," said a man who just then crossed his path.

The broker stopped and looked into the face of the new-comer.

"Who are you?" he asked.

It was quite dark at the place where they stood.

"Ponsby; don't you know me?" said the man, as he came nearer.

"Tom, I am glad to see you. When did you arrive?" asked Barnwell, anxiously.

"This afternoon. I have seen all. You are in trouble; what shall be done?"

"Something desperate. I am on the point of losing a great stake, but it must not be."

"I understand; the young yachtsman; he rescued her. How did it happen?"

"Well, we were in bathing, and had gone several rods from the shore, when a shark—one of those devils of the deep—came swimming around us, with evident designs for a meal. She became alarmed, and I must acknowledge that I was also terrorized, and swam for my own life, almost forgetting her. I swam ashore, while this young sea-dog, who happened to be near us, swam to her rescue and succeeded, as you know."

It is unfortunate for you, and I am sorry. His name is in everyone's mouth, and he is really the hero of the hour," replied Ponsby.

Yes, and my little demoralization is likely to ruin my prospects, unless he is put out of the way. Who is he, do you know?"

"I have heard that he is the younger son of an English nobleman."

"A what?"

"Son of an English nobleman. His yacht is lying at anchor just over here, and he is ashore for fun and a dventure."

"Good God, if she finds that out, she will soon be dead gone on him for a certainty. Have you any friends here?" he asked, eagerly.

"I have two fellows with me."

"Good and brave?"

"Red-hot, devil-may-care fellows. Why?"

"Come here," said he, taking Ponsby by the arm, and looking anxiously around. "We have got rid of several very troublesome personages in our day: why not put this fellow out of the way?"

"It might be the best thing we could do. How much would such a job be worth?"

"A thousand at least."

"Yes, and perhaps two thousand would not be considered too large a sum, if it was done nicely."

"Well—"

"Say as well as our young bootblack friend was put out of the way not long since."

"Yes, if it could be done as neatly as that was, why, two thousand might not be a large sum. Can you attend to it?"

"I think so."

"Will you?"

"Did I ever fail you yet?"

"Well, don't lose any time. Where is he now?"

"In the dining-room, receiving the congratulations and flatteries of the guests."

"Is she there?"

"I presume so."

"Well, get your friends and set to work at once."

"Depend upon me, sir."

The two men separated.

Ponsby's tools were close at hand, and he was not long in communicating with them.

In the meantime the lady whom Claud had rescued had retired to her room, and he was in the parlor in conversation with Mrs. Wildemere, the lady who had taken such an interest in him.

"And so you will not tell me anything about yourself?" said she.

"I have nothing to tell," replied Claud.

"Ah, yes you have. All of us have personal histories."

"True, but some of them cannot be interesting."

"Anything which relates to true valor is interesting. I have been told that you are the son of an English nobleman, and in that case —"

"Yes, in that case there might be something interesting—"

"Yes, indeed, for I am an Englishwoman myself, and should be doubly interested in you."

"But I am not an Englishman. I am an American, born in New York," said he proudly.

"Well, I honor you for loving it then. I had a sister who went to New York. She formed a romantic alliance with a poor mechanic, married him clandestinely and went with him to the New World. Poor girl! It was against our parents' wishes, and she was disowned. We never heard a word of her afterwards, but when our father died he forgave her and left her a fortune if she could be found."

"And have you never found her?"

"Never. I have spent several months in New York and Boston, but could gain no tidings of her. I have reluctantly come to the conclusion that she may be dead."

"That is too bad," said Claud, sorrowfully.

"Indeed you may well say so."

"And could you learn no particulars of her?"

"None; only that her husband died soon after their arrival in New York, and she was left a widow. In all likelihood she has married again, and under another name I have lost her."

"Did you ever try the 'Personals' in the *Herald*?"

"Yes, for weeks together, but all to no purpose."

"What was her name?"

"Her maiden-name was Elton, but she married a man by the name of O'Neil."

"O'Neil! I know a lady by the name of O'Neil," said he, with a renewed interest in the conversation.

"Yes, it is a very common name; but unless you know one by the name of Sadie O'Neil, she is not my sister."

"Ah! but her name is Sadie O'Neil," said he.

"What, Sadie O'Neil?"

"Yes, and she is a widow—has one daughter, a most lovable girl."

"You cannot mean it!"

"Indeed I do, and I love her daughter, Tilly," said he, frankly, and at the same time blushing like a wild red rose.

"It cannot be."

"What I tell you is true, madam."

"Do you know anything of her history?"

"But little. She was very sick and poor until fortune favored me, and I placed them above the reach of want."

"If she should prove to be my sister—"

"I hope she may, for I like you," said he, frankly.

"And I like you. I will take the first train to New York in the morning. Tell me her address."

Claud gave her the address.

"But I must say I came from you," said she.

"It would do no good."

"Why not?"

"Because they do not know me."

"Not know you," she asked, in surprise.

"Not as I am known now. But I will tell you of a name they will know."

"What is it?"

"Billy, the Bootblack."

"Billy, the Bootblack! How strange! If I do not mistake, there is a romance here. Who is this Billy, the Bootblack?"

"A friend of Mrs. O'Neil and her daughter. Say that you met his friend and it will be a guarantee of good faith."

"No; but this mystery—"

"You cannot care for it; you are going in search of your sister."

"But my curiosity is excited."

"Well, tell them—but you will keep my secret?"

"Yes, with my life."

"Then you can say that you met Billy, the Bootblack, and he gave you this information."

"And Claud Barnwell—"

"May or may not be a myth. At all events, they know nothing of such a person. Say that you met Billy, the Bootblack, and hereafter we may understand each other better."

"But when shall I see you again?"

"How long do you remain here?"

"Only for a short time, but a letter to the Hoffman House, New York, will be sure to reach me," said she.

"Very well; we will meet again."

"I trust so. To-morrow I will visit New York, and see if this Sadie O'Neil is my sister. When do you sail?"

"In the morning."

"Well, there, good-night. I shall never forget this romantic acquaintance."

"I trust not; but if you find this lady to be your sister, will you take particular care of her daughter, Tilly, for my sake?"

"I will, indeed, for your sake and my own. Good-night."

"Good-night."

They shook hands cordially and separated.

Claud went to the bar-room, expecting to find Captain Munson and Tommy, but as neither of



them were there he strolled out upon the piazza and enjoyed the delightful sea breeze.

Just as he parted with Mrs. Wildemere a dark figure stole from beneath the window near by where they had been sitting, and was soon lost to sight.

"Clande Barnwell—Billy the Bootblack—what does this all mean?" said Barnwell, for it was he that had been listening to the conversation. "What does it mean?"

He walked away for some distance, with his head bowed and his mind busily at work.

"This is the second time I have been startled by this phantom. Is he the same person who visited me at Long Branch? What mystery is here, and what fate is following me?"

He walked on until he reached the shore. It was now nearly midnight, and only a few people were abroad. At the different hotels the music still swelled, and pleasure still held her court; but the waves dashed sadly upon the sandy shore, and a wild hush was brooding over the scene.

The excitement that had attended our hero since his advent at Cape May was too great to admit of sleep, and, busy with his thoughts, he wandered away from the hotel and down upon the shore.

"How different life is from what I ever dreamed it was," he mused, as he walked along.

At that moment a slight movement in the sand attracted his attention. He turned quickly, and as he did so a figure leaped out of the darkness and dealt him a heavy blow on the head.

Not stunned he darted to one side, and three other figures came upon the scene. In an instant he felt that he was surrounded by assassins.

Quickly placing himself on guard, he drew a whistle from his pocket and gave one sharp, short blast, followed by a long one, the "Billow pipe."

Without heeding this, his enemies drew nearer, and were, with drawn knives and bludgeons, about to fall upon him, when Captain Munson, Tommy Mack, and several friends, who had more than once before answered this call, rushed down from the embankment and fell upon the assassins.

A sharp fight instantly followed, during which one of the rascals received a blow that sent him headlong into the sand, when the others took to their heels and were soon out of sight.

"Are you all right, Mr. Barnwell?" asked Captain Munson.

"Oh, yes, only a bad bust in the mug," replied Claud, cheerily.

"Let us get up to the hotel at once and see how bad it is," said the captain.

"Oh, it is nothing. Let us get on board the yacht at once," said Claud.

"Aye, aye, sir, this way."

Tommy Mack had fought like a little hero, and he was now close to his brave commander.

"Dis is a nasty place; let's get out of it," said he.

"So we will, Tommy," said Claud.

In the excitement the rascal who had received the fatal punishment was overlooked, for it was so dark that scarcely a hand before them could be seen, for the moon had set; and following Captain Munson, they soon reached the spot where the jolly boat was in waiting, and taking leave of their friends, they were rowed out to the *Billow*, leaving behind all the glory and the enmity that circumstances had created.

The following morning a corpse was found on the shore.

Ponsby knew that a mistake had been made, and that one of his tools had been made to bite the dust instead of the intended victim. But as there was two thousand dollars at stake, he arranged with the other ruffian to say nothing, but claim, if occasion required, that the real object had been removed and was no longer in the way. He and Claud did not look or dress alike.

Ponsby and Barnwell met that day about noon.

"Did you hear the news?" asked Ponsby.

"What is it?"

"The young sailor who killed the shark was himself killed last night in a drunken fight."

"Are you sure?"

"As sure as that I am here. I like to bring you good news."

"But the people—they knew him."

"No, they only saw him by gaslight, and they take it for granted that he was only a drunken sailor after all, and not much loss to the world," he said.

But there was a great excitement when the alleged fact became known, and yet with several there was a doubt raised about its being the gallant youth who had received their plaudits the night before. Among those who not only doubted, but felt firmly convinced, was Mrs. Wildemere. She looked out upon the ocean in quest of

the *Billow*, but it was nowhere to be seen, and she took the first train to New York, fully satisfied that our hero was not dead but had escaped safely from his enemies.

The corpse found on the shore, and by some, thought to be the gallant and reckless young sailor; was taken in charge by the authorities, but as there were no witnesses to say how he received his death, a verdict was given that he "came to his death by some means unknown to the jury," and was buried in a pauper's grave.

The pleasure and excitement of life at Cape May could not be molested by a trifle like the death of an unknown man, and so, before night came it was seemingly forgotten, or was only talked over by loungers as a strange episode in life and so let drop.

In the meantime the *Billow* was speeding away, and William Barnwell was striving to regain the foothold he had lost.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### A LONG LOST RELATION.

THE next day Mrs. Wildemere started for New York with the directions she had received.

The *Billow* spread her wings to the breeze that came with the morning light, and stood gracefully across the mouth of the Delaware Bay.

To all save Claud the affair of the attempted assassination on the beach at Cape May, was a mystery. He knew all about it, for he had even recognized Ponsby's voice in the *melee* and knew that he was once more acting the part of Barnwell's tool in removing a trouble. He had offended him by rescuing the lady with whom he was bathing, and finding that she treated him with the contempt his cowardice merited, he resolved to be partially revenged by removing the person to whom she looked with sentiments of admiration and gratitude.

All this he undertook, and as usual he kept his own counsel. Of course neither Barnwell or Ponsby knew who he really was, and for this reason he resolved to quit the place as quickly as possible and let matters shape themselves still further until such time as he should be ready to carry out his now well defined line of action.

There was only a gentle breeze and Claud resolved to take breakfast on deck in company with Mr. Winsome and Captain Munson.

Tommy soon had the table spread, for he was fast becoming an adept at the business of cook and waiter.

The *Billow* was now scudding before the wind and crossing the Delaware Bay.

The sights on either hand were delightful, and breakfast never tasted better in the world.

Mr. Winsome and Captain Munson both appeared anxious to learn the cause of the attempt upon Claud's life at Cape May, but wishing to keep the truth to himself, he explained it as though in his opinion it was occasioned by nothing but jealousy at his success in rescuing the lady from the shark.

This being finally taken as the real cause, both Winsome and Munson began as they sat at the table to point out objects of interest along the way; and when Claud became aware that both Wilmington and Philadelphia could be reached through this beautiful bay and river, he gave orders to tack and stand away up the bay.

The conversation between Munson and Winsome was edifying to Claud, for by it he learned much of the history of various points and places which they had passed on their way up the river. It seemed to Claud that the whole world was spread out before him.

That night they anchored before Wilmington, and went ashore to see the city and its various points of interest.

And a pleasant visit it proved to be, as well as a profitable one to the young pupil of Mr. Winsome, who seemed so anxious to learn all that was to be learned about everything.

The following day they sailed for Philadelphia, taking careful observation by the way, for the more Claud learned the more he appeared anxious to find out respecting every point of interest.

At Philadelphia they found enough to last them for nearly a week. They visited Independence Hall, the United States Mint, the Fairmount Water Works, Girard College, Fairmount Park, the Navy-Yard, and the thousand and one objects of a historical and general interest to be found in and around the good old Quaker City.

To Claud it was actual contact with history, and by the help of his tutor he learned more in that short week than he could have learned in a year by study at school. Mr. Winsome was a thoroughly posted man, and he found an apt and eager pupil in Claud.

After this visit at this place they again headed for the ocean, and started down the Delaware coast. Off Cape Henlopen let us part with the

*Billow* and her gallant crew and return there again hereafter.

Mrs. Wildemere reached New York and at once sought the home of Mrs. O'Neil, or the one to which Claud had directed her; but she was not there. What it could mean she did not know. The whole affair, from first to last, had seemed so much like a dream or a wild romance to her, that she was scarcely disappointed when, on reaching the end of her journey, to find that there existed no trace of the sister she sought.

Claud had dawned upon her so mysteriously, had flitted so like the hero of a drama before her, and disappeared so unaccountably, that she almost blamed herself for paying any attention whatever to the story, or treating it otherwise than she would have treated a dream.

It was quite an unusual sight to see so richly a dressed lady in that part, or indeed, in any part of Center street, and consequently a crowd of women and dirty children gathered around the hack or followed her up the stairs of the tenement house.

After failing to get any information in the house, Mrs. Wildemere descended to the now crowded sidewalk with a shade of sadness on her face. The reflections before alluded to were occupying her mind, and she stood for a moment as if undecided which way to go or what to do next.

The women and children gathered around, and gazed at her saucily in the face. It was quite a while before she became aware of being an object of interest, and then she started for the coach.

An old Irish woman stood near the door, gazing intently at her, with a half serious, half-comical look in her face. The short stump pipe that she had been smoking had gone out, and with protruding eyes and mouth agape she was regarding the troubled face of the strange lady.

"I will make one more inquiry," she said to herself, as she stood with her hand on the handle of the carriage door, and then turning to the old woman, she asked:

"My good woman, I was directed here to find a lady by the name of O'Neil, but am told upstairs that no such person lives here."

"No more they don't," replied the old lady, quickly.

"How long have you lived here?"

"These five years, so I have."

"And during that time has there ever resided here a lady by the name of O'Neil?"

"Niver a wunst."

"Never?"

"But there were a woman by that name here a short time beyanst."

"Did you know anything about her?"

"Not a snootful. She was poor as any of us, an' her girl sold papers on the strate beyant, but she war too proud ter mix wid her neighbors, an' so we could niver find her out."

"She had a daughter?"

"She had."

"Did you ever learn either her or her mother's name?"

"O'Neil, do you moind."

"I know; but their Christian names."

"Faix, I niver hearn tell of the mother's name, but the childer used to call the girl Tilly, or something loike that."

"Do you know what has become of them?"

"I do not."

"How long is it since they lived here?"

"About a month or more."

It was quite evident that Mrs. Wildemere had found a clew which corresponded with what she had previously learned from Claud, and it was quite as evident that her informant was not telling all she knew, and that she was on no terms of love with the subject of their conversation.

Mrs. Wildemere took a dollar from her pocket-book and gave it to the old woman. As money always does, it worked like a charm.

"Thank ye, lady, I'm obliged ter ye," said she, courtesying to her respectfully, at the same time feasting her eyes upon the bill.

"What sort of a looking woman was she?"

"A nate, delicate-looking creature, sickly most of the toime, an' mournin' for somethin'."

"And very poor?"

"Faix, they were poor enough till onct."

"What do you mean?"

"Faix, she was as poor as a pig in a bog until some toime agone, when something good overtook her."

"Something good?"

"Faix, we none of us knowed what it was, but all ter onct she seemod ter have money by the bushel; an' she left this house for a better one, but where I do not know, neither do any of us."

"Where did she get her money?"

"May the devil spare me If I know, but we all had our suspicionings, so we did."

"What did you suspect?"



"That there was a devil, or a fairy, or some dark thing about it. But at all events, she got it, an' had doctors, an' wine, an' good things by the bushel, so she did. But she would never tell anybody anything about it."

"How old a person was she?"

"About thirty or more."

"Black hair, or brown?"

"Brown, fair hair, streaked wid gray, loike mine, der ye see," said the old woman, pushing back her frilled cap and smoothing her gray hair.

"And her eyes?"

"Faix, they had wapin' in 'em most always, so ye couldn't tell, but I think they were brown."

"It must be Sadie," said Mrs. Wildemere to herself. "How old was her daughter?"

"About fourteen or fifteen, I guess. She had kinder golden hair, fair skin, an' was smart an' lively loike."

"Do you suppose there is any one here who can tell me where they have gone?"

"Faix, I think not. She seemed ter want ter hide it from us where she were a-goin'."

"I don't wonder at that," thought Mrs. Wildemere.

"There war much wantin' ter know where she went, but divil a one could find it out."

Thanking her, Mrs. Wildemere got into the carriage and ordered the driver to take her back again to the Hoffman House, while the old woman and her gossips indulged in all sorts of wild speculation regarding the occurrence.

After resting awhile Mrs. Wildemere was driven to the headquarters of the police on Mulberry street, and then sought the Superintendent. She gave him all the particulars and asked his advice.

"Return to your hotel, madam, and I will place a keen detective on the track, and if anything is learned I will communicate with you at the earliest moment," said he.

This being the best she could do under the circumstances, she was compelled to accept it and await events.

Two days she waited and then a message came from the Superintendent of Police, asking her to come to his office.

Obedying the summons, she was introduced to Detective Elder, and together they re-entered the carriage and were driven to a respectable house on Fourteenth street.

"Unless I am very much mistaken, madam, the person you seek lives here. Go in. I will wait ten minutes here for you to return, and, if at the end of that time you fail to do so, I shall take it for granted that I have made no mistake, and return to my duty," said the detective, as he assisted her from the carriage.

"Thanks, and at all events you shall hear from me again," said she.

She rang the bell and was admitted by Tilly O'Neil, as bright and beautiful a girl as she had ever seen, in fact, almost a counterpart of her sister Sadie as she remembered her years ago.

"Is this Miss O'Neil?" she asked.

"It is."

"Can I see your mother?"

"Certainly, walk right this way," said she, leading her towards a neatly-furnished parlor.

In a few moments Mrs. O'Neil entered, and Mrs. Wildemere rose to greet her. One look was sufficient.

"Sadie! Don't you know me?"

"Isabella!"

"Yes yes, your sister!"

The next moment the two were folded in each other's arms, while Tilly stood looking on in perfect surprise.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE "BILLOW" AND HER CREW.

We parted with the *Billow* and her gallant crew off Cape Henlopen, headed down the coast of the Southern States.

She was a stanch little craft, made to weather almost anything to be met with on the Atlantic border, and as she was in the hands of a gallant gentleman, who knew all about her, and what she could do, of course there was no danger, especially as she kept close in, and could run into an inlet or bay on the approach of bad weather.

Down the Delaware, Maryland and Virginia coast they sailed, stopping at various points of interest, and making themselves acquainted with everything they met. They at length tacked, and headed up Chesapeake Bay, visiting Annapolis, Baltimore, and other places of interest. Then on their return they sailed up the Potomac as far as Washington, stopping at Mount Vernon, and visiting the grave of Washington, the Father of his Country, Alexandria, and other places of note, all the way back again to the broad Bay.

Then they visited Norfolk, Fortress Monroe, Old Point Comfort, then stood down the coast towards North Carolina.

While sailing the weary miles which line the shore where nothing can be seen but the low stretch of land which borders Virginia and North Carolina, Mr. Winsome was attentive to Claud, informing him of the history of the States and localities, and explaining to his mind in various ways, and fitted him for the wide world he was entering upon.

Fearing the storms off Cape Hatteras, Captain Munson decided to cut into Oregon Inlet, and strike into Pamlico Sound, as being less exposed.

Visiting several places of interest, they sailed on and struck out into Onslow Bay, which is really the broad ocean again at Fort Macon, North Carolina.

After visiting this renowned fortification they kept on until they reached Wilmington, some distance up the Cape Fear river.

From Wilmington they sailed to Charleston, South Carolina, and resolved to spend some days here among the fortifications and points of interest.

Charleston is not what it was before the war, but it is still beautiful and grand, and some of the finest people in the world are to be met with here, and also some of the funniest.

There is a large colored population, and many of them hang around the wharves and have their amusement and pick up their precarious living around them.

Claud and Tommy spent much time ashore, for the genuine darkey on his native heath interested them both very much.

They had seen him represented on the stage, but here he was in all the glory of sunshine, music and laziness.

But at length it was decided to sail the next day for Savannah and so on down to Florida.

Claud and Tommy had been ashore enjoying themselves hugely, and were now waiting for Jack to come for them to take them on board the yacht.

There seemed to be a misunderstanding regarding time, and so they seated themselves on the string piece of the wharf to wait until the jolly boat appeared.

Of course they were soon surrounded by a crowd of darkies, ranging all the way from three to sixty years of age, for a uniform has as much attraction for the average southern darkey as molasses has for flies.

"Let us have some fun with them," said Claud.

"Bully, let us," replied Tommy, slapping his thighs.

"Come here," said Claud, beckoning to a young darkey who stood looking at them.

"Sah?"

"Come here. What can you do?"

"I see a light porter, boss."

"Can you dance?"

"Can I? Wal, I guess yes," replied he, whirling around on one foot.

"Good enough. Show us something."

"All right, Massa. Lots of boys hea dat dance," said he, pointing to the crowd.

"Well, all right. Got any music?"

"Guess so, Massa. I say, Jake, whar am dat banjo?" he asked, calling to another fellow.

"Down dar ahind dem cotton bales."

"Wal, foteh her along."

"What foah?"

"Gemmens what some 'musement."

"Yes. Give us some fun; we'll pay you well," said Claud.

"Oh, ho! dat am my mutton," said the owner of the banjo, starting on a run to get it.

At this a crowd of sables gathered around and anxiety was on tiptoe.

Such another motley and comical group could not be scared up short of Charleston, South Carolina.

The banjoist soon returned with his instrument, and the excitement began to manifest itself. He turned up his music machine, and it was evident that he was anything but a slouch at the strings.

"Say, you, Tom, jump in here, an' sho de gemmen de dancein' steps what yer got in yer," said he.

"All right, Jake, only I a in't got any shoes," said he, pointing to a huge pair of feet.

"Here, Sam, gib Tom dem scows ob yours."

Tom was soon encased in a pair of the largest shoes our hero had ever seen. No wonder they were called scows.

The banjoist began a break-down, and Tom bounded out upon the clean planks, and began to spot that music down in the most approved Southern style.

"Go in, Thomas!" shouted one.

"Go it, boy! Dig de dirt out ob dem cracks!" yelled another. And Tom evidently did his level best to comply with the request.

"Bully boy!" shouted Tommy, whose enthusiasm was up to the boiling point. "Beats Me-

Andrews all to nuffin!" he added, turning to Claud.

"You are right, Tommy."

"Get in dar!"

"Bounce round, dar!"

"Wal wal!"

"Oh, massa Moses!"

And so they shouted and encouraged the dancer. But this could not last long. The whole crowd seemed ready to join in the performance, and could not keep still to the music.

"All go in!" shouted Claud, and in an instant old and young, big and little were dancing like merry madmen.

Such break-downs, such shouting and jollity Claud and Tommy had never seen before. It was far better than anything they had ever seen on the stage in New York, and they enjoyed it hugely.

The dance lasted for ten or fifteen minutes, and only ceased with the music of the banjo.

"Good enough," said Claud.

"What a band a fellow could get up here," said Tommy.

"Yes, indeed. I say, Jake, can you sing us a song?"

"Yes, massa, plenty ob 'em. Come' round heah, boys, an' spit de cotton out ob your throats."

"All right, Jake," said a dozen or more, gathering around him.

"Now, den, 'Charleston Gals,' do ye heah? Gib de young gemmen sumpin' what dey nebbber see afore."

"All right, Jake," they replied.

Jake played the accompaniment to the song and sang the solo, while the crowd joined in the chorus in fine style, better than either of the boys had ever heard it rendered before.

Then came the interlude and breakdown, and such a breakdown as it was! It would have astonished those who might suppose they had seen it performed by northern minstrel troupes.

When this was finished, and applauded by the two youths, the company sang other songs and danced walk-arounds for an hour or more.

During this time Jack had arrived with the boat, and was waiting Claud's pleasure.

"The wind and tide both serve now, sir, Captain Munson says," said the sailor.

"All right; we'll be with you soon. Good-bye, boys. Here is something for you to make merry with," said Claud, handing each of them a dollar.

A right jovial cheer went up at this, and as our hero stepped into the boat, the grateful darkeys gathered on the string-piece and sang "I'm off for Charleston," with fine effect.

The boat was leaving them behind. Tommy stood up and waved his cap at them, and they swung their old straw hats and yelled a good speed to them.

Then they sang one of their half-pious, half-comical songs, which have since become popular throughout the North, the words of which run something like this:

SOLO.—What am dese shoes dat we do wear?

CHORUS.—Oh, yes! oh, yes!

SOLO.—Dey am to climb those golden stairs!

CHORUS.—Oh, yes! oh, yes!

Then wait 'till I put on de robe!

Wait 'till I put on de robe!

Wait 'till I put on de robe!

Oh, yes! oh, yes!

While the melody was yet ringing in their ears, they rowed away further and further, until it died entirely away, and our friends were taken on board the *Billow*.

From Charleston they sailed to Savannah, and after remaining there a day or two, long enough to become acquainted with the place, they again set sail for Jacksonville, Florida, and from there to St. Augustine.

Here they resolved to tarry awhile. Mr. Winsome instructed Claud in the history of this flowery peninsula, telling him of the search of Ponce de Leon for the fountain of youth, which he fondly imagined to be somewhere in this land of almost Eden beauties.

St. Augustine is the oldest town in the United States, and all the history and romance that is woven around it, Mr. Winsome imparted to his attentive and interested pupil. All this while, it must be remembered, Claud was being educated in other branches, as well as history and travel.

From this point they sailed to various others, going entirely around the peninsula through Florida Bay into the Gulf of Mexico. Nearly two months were thus spent, and pleasure, sensation, and adventure met them on every hand.

They went ashore to hunt, killed alligators, captured turtles, shot bears and birds of plumage rarer than they had ever seen before. In short, it was a continued round of adventure, discovery



and pleasure. Beautiful islands by the thousand, dismal swamps, flowering everglades, blossoming solitudes, abundant rivers, forests of flower and orange groves, scenes of beauty and enchantment met them on every side, and almost held them spell-bound.

After spending several weeks amid such scenes as these they returned to St. Augustine and had the *Billow* refitted, for she had been through some hard experience since leaving New York.

During the time this was going on, Mr. Winsome, with Claud and Tommy, took a trip into the interior to see the country inland and become more familiar with its people. They found a large number of Northern visitors, and in their company several days were spent.

Finally they returned again to St. Augustine, and found their stanch little yacht all ready and in fine trim for future adventures.

The day before they were to sail a fearful storm came up.

Those who have ever visited the Florida coast know perhaps too well the dreadful potency of those storms, with rain, thunder and lightning accompaniments, the very breath and spirit of a hurricane vaunts itself upon the sea and sends it wrathfully upon the trembling shore.

The harbor of St. Augustine is only slightly protected, and the storm beat the waves into madness that rolled upon the docks and shore. But the *Billow* was in safe hands, and although she was tossed about like a cork on the surging billows, she rode as safe as a cork would have ridden.

The inhabitants were gathered upon the wharves and along the shore, for they are naturally wreckers, and instinctively await the issue of a storm, knowing that many steamers and sailing vessels are always on the coast. Thousands have found watery graves, and hundreds of brave vessels have gone down in the wild Atlantic that stretches along the Southern coast.

It was a matter of wonder and charm that the little *Billow* should remain so far out in such a frightful storm. It was the general opinion that she would be lost, and so all eyes were centered on her, perhaps because the blinding storm prevented them from seeing much more beyond.

The winds blowed a hurricane, the rain came down in pelting torrents, the thunder crashed in the sky, and the fiery lightning flashed in zig-zag terrors in every direction. One's voice could not be heard, and the shades of evening began to settle down, which made the scene still more terrible.

"Can she stand it, captain?" asked Claud, as he clung to the companion way.

"Stand it! To be sure. She was made for just such whiffs as this," replied the gallant old tar.

"Whiffs!" exclaimed Tommy. "What's a blow, captain?"

"A blow—why, when the wind lifts her out of the water and takes her into the air."

Tommy tried to swallow the yarn, and at the same time to give his trousers the sailor hoist at the waist, but it was only a partial success, and the little cabin-boy was bounced up against the mast.

"Oh, this is all right. Everything is close-reefed, and she has got her nose to the wind," added Munson.

"But the anchor?" queried Claud.

"That's all right; it rides ready to let go whenever any danger threatens."

"Hal! look there, captain!" said Claud, pointing out to sea. "There is a ship in a bad way."

"What! I should say so. By Jove, her rigging is all carried away, and she is being driven on the rocks," exclaimed the captain, while all hands strained their eyes in the direction.

It took a keen pair of eyes to distinguish the craft through the mist and rain, but the old sailor saw it and knew the danger.

At that moment a gun was fired on board.

Even this was scarcely distinguishable from the rolls of thunder and the flashes of lightning, but those on board the *Billow* saw it, even though she failed to reach the shore.

"She is lost," said Munson.

"Let us go to the rescue," said Claud.

The proposition was startling, even to the old sea-dog of a captain and the sailor.

"Up with the jib and make for her," shouted Claud, excitedly.

"She cannot live under a jib," replied Munson.

"Then give her half of it. Reef her down and stand for the wreck."

"But—I—I—say, Mr.—"

"Not a word. Up with the anchor; give her what canvas she can live under and make for the vessel in distress. You are not afraid, captain?"

"Afraid! I don't know what the word means."

"Neither do I."

"I was only thinking of you, sir."

"Never think of me; think only of those on board the doomed ship."

"Aye, aye, sir. I am with you," said he, going forward with Sailor Jack.

"Brace up, Tommy," said Claud, turning to the cabin boy, whose eyes were protruding from their sockets.

"Aren't you afraid, sir?"

"No. What of?"

"Getting drowned."

"No. Bear a hand there. We must reach that vessel, blow high or blow low, Mr. Winsome."

"Yes, sir," replied the teacher, inclining towards our hero, but still holding fast to the rigging.

"We must reach that wreck."

"Yes, sir. I am with you."

"Me too, sir," put in Tommy.

"All right. Now, then, careful."

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Steady," called the captain, and in a few moments the jib was run halfway up, and the *Billow* scudded away to leeward like a rocket.

She was soon lost to the sight of those on shore, and various were the speculations as to her fate.

No life-boat would venture forth, for the breakers beat upon the shore with fatal wrath.

By tacking this way and that, Captain Munson managed to approach the wreck.

It was a bark, and had struck upon the rocks.

The rigging had been carried away, and the crew and several passengers were now clinging to the bulwarks, over which the waves were flying in their terrible majesty.

The *Billow* seemed like a stormy petrel, and approached within hailing distance.

"Throw a line," shouted Munson, and in a moment a cord was hurled like a lasso through the air to the leeward and fell on the deck of the *Billow*.

This was soon made fast to one of the stanchions, and one after another of the passengers were enabled to reach the yacht.

It was an undertaking of great danger and the three or four ladies on board the fatal vessel seemed paralyzed, and unable to do more than cling to their hold with death-like tenacity.

"Captain Munson, stand ready," shouted Claud, and before any of them could comprehend what he meant, he seized a line and fastening it around his body, he caught the rope which connected them to the sinking ship, and going hand over hand, in spite of the tremendous waves, he soon reached the deck of the bark.

All eyes were turned upon him. Creeping along to a female crouched in the attitude of prayer, his untied the cord which encircled his waist, he fastened it securely around hers, and signaling to those on board the yacht, he lifted her in his arms and dropped her gently into the raging sea.

She was instantly drawn on board the yacht and saved.

Securing another line he threw one end of it to the yacht and secured two other women in the same way, while a sailor still remaining on board the bark took the remaining one in his arms and leaped overboard.

He was rescued with his burden.

The captain of the ill-fated bark still remained on board.

Struggling to where Claud stood, he seized him by the hand. But he was too much exhausted to speak his thanks, and Claud himself could only return the pressure of his hand.

Seeing that all was lost beyond hope, Claud seized the line and started for the yacht, followed by the captain.

Once on board in safety, Claud wiped the brine from his face and turned his attention to those whom he had rescued, while Captain Munson let out a yard or two of the jib and went scudding before the wind toward St. Augustine.

The ladies were taken below into the cabin. Claud went below to assist in their recovery.

A beautiful face lay upturned to him. He gazed at it a moment in astonishment.

He had surely seen it somewhere before.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### A STRANGE MEETING.

THE *Billow* stood straight for the land, but Captain Munson knew full well that it would be sure death to attempt to approach too near, so he bore off and on until he reached the shelter of an island where he dropped anchor, and the overloaded yacht swam at comparative rest.

The crew and passengers of the wrecked *Eve* filled every portion of the *Billow*, and thankful they were that she was able to hold them and weather the storm.

No communication could be held with the shore while the storm raged, and so they were compelled to huddle together the best they could until it should subside, making the best of everything.

Claud Barnwell stood for some minutes gazing

into the face of the beautiful lady who lay in his berth, thinking where he had seen her before.

But at length he became confused with thinking, and turning away he lent his assistance to Mr. Winsome and Tommy, who were doing all in their power for the comfort of the rescued passengers.

After all had been done that could be for them, Claud went on deck, where he found the captain and his rescued crew huddled together in the waist of the yacht, mourning their loss.

The moment they caught sight of our youthful hero they all extended their hands and sent up a wild glad cheer in his honor.

"Young man, you are a hero!" exclaimed the captain, seizing him by the hand.

"Hurrah! hurrah!" shouted the men.

"I don't know about that, but I am glad that I have been fortunate enough to rescue you," replied Claud, frankly.

"I've had nothing but bad luck ever since I left New York," said the captain.

"Perhaps you had a Jonah on board," suggested Captain Munson, good-naturedly.

At that moment a man approached the group, and Claud observed him.

It was Tom Ponsby.

"A Jonah, indeed," said he, starting back.

"Who?—what?" asked several, noticing the excited look of our hero.

"Do you know that man?" asked Claud pointing to Ponsby.

"Yes—Mr. Brace—one of my passengers," said Captain Bell.

"His name is not Brace, but Tom Ponsby, as big a rascal as the man he serves!" replied Claud, excitedly.

Ponsby started back, and grasping a stanchion to steady himself, he wiped the water from his face, and gazed in speechless amazement at the indignant youth, who stood frowning upon him, while the others composing the company looked on in astonishment.

"I know you, sir, in spite of all disguises!"

Still Ponsby made no reply, but with his eyes riveted on Claud, he seemed to be trying to recollect him.

"What are you doing here?" asked Claud, as soon as his emotion had subsided a trifle.

But Ponsby made no audible reply, although his lips moved as though he was endeavoring to do so.

"You know him then?" asked the captain.

"Yes, and I have good cause to do so. Munson, this is the rascal who led the attempt to assassinate me at Cape May," said he, turning to him.

"He is?" asked the brave old tar, approaching with clenched fists.

"As sure as we are here," replied Claud.

At this all hands turned upon Ponsby fiercely.

"You—you are mistaken, sir," stammered Ponsby, as he saw the stern faces turned upon him.

"No, sir, I am not mistaken. I know you for a sneaking rascal of the worst kind."

"I—I—" stammered Ponsby again.

"He came from New York with you, did he not, captain?" asked Claud, turning to the captain of the *Eve*.

"Yes, sir, he and his niece."

"What? Which one of the ladies is his niece?" asked Claud quickly.

"The light, fair-haired one."

"Good God!" exclaimed Claud, darting down the companion-way into the cabin, followed by the captain.

By this time the ladies had partially recovered, and arranged themselves somewhat.

"This is the lady," said the captain, pointing to the one who had previously attracted Claud's attention.

"Good heavens, it is she," he whispered.

"Do you know me, sir?" she asked, looking up in his face.

"I think so. Were you not rescued from a shark at Cape May some time ago?"

"Yes, by a brave boy whom they murdered," said she, sorrowfully.

"No, they did not murder him, although they attempted it."

"And does he still live?"

"He does. I am he."

"Thank God! thank God! Oh, sir, do you know that I half imagined it was you?"

"And I am very glad that it is."

"You have twice saved my life, noble youth," she said, extending her hand to him.

Claud pressed it reassuringly.

"How came you here in company with that villain? You are not his niece?"

"No, no, thank Heaven—he is no relation. He is trying to make everybody believe that I am insane, and that he is taking me to Havana for my health."

Claud turned to the captain.



"That is the way he has represented it, sir," said he.

"But did you not know better?"

"How should I know? There are such strange things in this world. He has a paper signed by two doctors, stating that she is insane, and that they recommended her to be removed to Havana."

"William Barnwell is at the bottom of this," said Claud, still holding her hand.

"Yes, I know he is. I took your advice and refused to go to Europe with him. I returned to New York and was seized by this man, taken to a private asylum, and from thence on board this vessel you have just rescued me from."

"A villainous conspiracy," exclaimed Claud.

"It looks like it," replied the captain.

"I know it is. This rascal, Ponsby, has been doing the dirty work of this villain, Barnwell, who, for some reason or other, wishes to gain possession of this lady."

"I was very weak and foolish to encourage him for a moment, knowing he was a married man. But I am an orphan, having no friends and relations to whom I can go for counsel or advice."

"I am very sorry for you, but if you will place yourself under my charge I will see that you are safe from your tormentor for the future."

"Oh, thank you, sir, thank you!" she exclaimed.

"Make yourself as comfortable as possible until the storm abates sufficiently to enable us to get to the shore, and then I will see that you are all put in more comfortable quarters."

Two of the ladies were in company with their husbands, and they all thanked Claud fervently for his bravery and kindness.

"Follow me," said he turning to the captain.

They went on deck again.

The sailors were standing around Ponsby, who clung to the stanchions and quaked with fear.

He had been trying to convince them that the commander of the yacht had made a mistake, and that he was a gentleman.

But in this he was only partially successful.

The storm had now abated somewhat, and the rain was gone entirely.

But the wind blew furiously, and the waves dashed high and angrily as far as the eye could reach.

Claud strode up to the cringing rascal.

"Overboard with you!" said he.

"Wh—what?"

"Overboard with you, and if you value your miserable life, swim for it."

"But you—your surely would not—"

"I surely would. The yacht belongs to me, and if I know it no rascal such as you are shall ever tread her decks. Overboard with you, or I will throw you over."

"But the storm—"

"It is good for you. So!"

The sailors gathered nearer.

"He is a scoundrel," said the captain.

"Heave him!" they shouted.

"Gentlemen, I—" screamed Ponsby.

"Bounce him!" shouted the sailors.

"We know all about you," said the captain.

"Why not send him to prison?" suggested Mr. Winsome, who had joined the party.

"No; let him swim for his life, and give him law afterwards," said Captain Munson.

"Douce his glim!"

"Hoist him!"

"Duck him!"

By this time it became evident that his life was worth nothing where he was, and so he resolved to take the chances that were offered, and grasping a rope he swung off into the raging water, followed by the derisive shouts of those whom he had left behind him.

By this time night was setting in, and as he disappeared in the darkness Claud turned to the men and gave a portion of Ponsby's history, even more than enough to justify the course he had taken.

The storm had somewhat abated, but still the weather looked so threatening that it was decided to remain at anchor where they were until the next morning before attempting to land.

Fortunately the *Billow* was stored with everything that heart could wish, and all hands were made as comfortable as could be expected under the circumstances.

When morning dawned it was found that the weather had cleared and that the sun shone as bright through skies as calm and clear as had ever tempted pleasure seekers forth.

The wrecked bark had gone to pieces on the rocks and had entirely disappeared, while portions of the cargo was floating around in every direction.

The wreckers on shore were busy, and several boats were seen picking up the valuable drift.

Captain Munson at once set sail for the harbor of St. Augustine, and great was the sensation the

appearance of the yacht created, as she had been given up as lost by everybody who had seen her the day before when the storm was at its height.

The ladies were taken to a hotel and provided with necessities, while Claud and the gallant *Billow* were objects of interest in the whole city.

The praise for his gallant acts were in the mouth of everybody, and the telegraph bore the gallant affair all over the land.

No tidings could be gleaned of Ponsby. If he had succeeded in reaching the shore he had probably concluded that the sooner he got away from that locality the better it would be for him, and had taken the cars either for the north or to some other locality.

The captain of the *Eae* remained at St. Augustine long enough to secure all that could be saved of his unfortunate bark, after which he and his crew shipped on board a steamer and returned to New York.

Claud and Miss Munro became the very best of friends, and after understanding each other's history, it is no wonder that they were friends.

Claud parted with her at the end of a week from the time of the wreck, he to continue his trip, she to go to Washington, and there await a letter of instructions from him.

The other passengers continued their journey to Havana by other means, and when the *Billow* set sail to continue her cruise, there remained nothing behind but pleasant memories and the best of wishes for her continued success and the happiness of her brave commander.

The night before she sailed, a banquet was given by some of the leading citizens of St. Augustine, and hundreds paid their respects to the gallant youths whose name was in every one's mouth, and the next day they sailed.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### BACK TO NEW YORK AGAIN.

CLAUD had intended to continue his journey still further south, but the events which had crowded upon him during the last few days made him change his mind, and set sail for New York, resolved upon finishing the cruise at a future time, and after the bad business had been settled.

Another thing, he was a trifle homesick, and was anxious to see Tilly O'Neil, and learn how she was getting along in her new sphere of life and also if she had been found by Mrs. Wildemere.

So the *Billow* was headed to the north once more, and lively breezes wafted her along cheerily, mile after mile, going over the same course they had sailed over and admired before, and reviewing the lessons and experiences which had proven to be so interesting.

"We will stop at Cape May, captain," said Claud.

"Ay, ay, sir. Stop long?"

"No, I only wish to call and make some inquiries."

"We shall be able to make it about sunset I think."

"All right, run in and anchor about where we did before," replied Claud, turning away to his book, in which he was deeply engrossed.

"The sooner we get into some harbor the better, I think," said Captain Munson a few moments afterwards.

"Is that so?" asked Claud, looking up.

"Yes. Do you see those clouds off there in the west?"

"Yes, but they don't look dangerous."

"Ah! but they do though. There are half a dozen squalls, and any quantity of nasty weather in that grim vapor," said Munson.

"Very well, use your own judgment."

Thus far they had enjoyed fine weather since leaving St. Augustine. Even off Cape Hatteras fortune favored them with only a lively breeze, and all hands had been lulled into a feeling of security which bordered on downright laziness and stupidity.

But the prophecy of Captain Munson was only founded on experience, and before an hour had passed it was evident that he was right, and that a wild thunder tornado was beginning to wake from slumber in the west.

In opposition to this, however, the wind had all died out, and the *Billow* lolled on the placid sea like a sea gull in repose. On every side there were various kinds of craft, but they all stood still with suspended sails for which there was no breeze.

"This don't look like nastiness, cap," said Claud closing his book, handing it to Mr. Winsome, and throwing his arms aloft in a fervent yawn.

"Indeed, sir, but this very calm betokens the worst."

"Do you think so?"

"Certainly. I would give a hundred for a chop or two of wind just now," replied Munson.

"Is there any danger?"

"Well, this a bad locality for a squall. If we could only wear up to the forward a mile or two we should be much better off."

"But see those other yachts," said Claud, pointing to the windward. "They don't appear to scent danger."

"How do we know the feelings of those on board the different yachts? They are all becalmed now and cannot help themselves if they would."

There, see those yachts there to the leeward; they are taking in sail and getting ready for a blow."

"You are right, cap."

"Here is a large yacht here to the east that seems to be reeling," suggested Mr. Winsome.

"Yes, and if I mistake not that is the *Henrietta*," replied Captain Munson, bringing his glass to bear upon the craft in question. "Yes, it is, and when old Samuels shortens sail you may make up your mind that something is coming."

"Well, let it come. The *Billow* can stand it all," replied Claud, carelessly.

"I guess she can."

"Well, use your own judgment and we will take what comes. But there seems to be a large number of yachts out here around us."

"Yes, it has been a good sailing day and the most of them are private boats owned by people who are stopping at Cape May, with a few from Long Branch. Look there! Do you see those clouds scudding away to the east? Jack, let go the mainsail and let us take adouble reef."

This was soon accomplished.

"Now, then, let go the jib. Give it a double stand ready."

Even to eyes less experienced than those of bold Captain Munson, the dead calm, the black appearance of the clouds which lay off in the west, would have suggested coming trouble.

Mass upon mass, fold upon fold, the clouds rolled up in their inky intensity, and presently the deep mutterings of distant thunder greeted the ears of those on shore and on board the endoz craft which lay becalmed upon the dark waters.

Higher and higher rolled the clouds, dark as night in their suggestiveness, and ever and anon fiery flashes of lightning gleamed through the dark banks, like some fierce demon displaying his teeth before a feast.

"Now she comes," said Munson, as an advance breeze whipped across the water.

"Let it come," said Claud, who had been so long without a sensation that he actually longed for one.

"Get out your nor-westers. Make ready, Jack."

"Ay, ay, sir."

"We must clear that point of land before the squall strikes us, or go to Davy Jones's locker."

"You are trying to frighten us, Cap," said Claud, laughing.

"Wait a few moments, and see. If we don't have as good as we had at St. Augustine, scull me ashore with a swab."

"We can stand it; can't we, Tommy?"

"Duck my tarry top-lights, I'll bet we can," replied the little fellow.

Tommy had become very "salt" by this time, and had at his tongue's end all the slang of a gay old tar.

The advance breeze had by this time freshened into almost a gale. The *Billow* began to scud to the leeward, and the waves put on their white caps and commenced to tumble around savagely. As far as one could see, the waters had assumed a savage ruffle.

Glancing to the leeward, they saw that the storm had not yet reached the yachts which lay beyond them, but they stood prepared for what was coming.

But this view lasted only for a moment. The cloud shut down darkly, a blinding mist soon got between the *Billow* and the other yachts, and "each for himself" became the order of the hour.

The lightning flashed around them as though chaos had come again, while the thunder crashed and the winds howled in dire and dreadful harmony.

By this time the brave little yacht was laying down before the wind almost on her beam ends, while Captain Munson stood by the helm, and with face watched everything around and on board.

"Yacht ahoy! Port your helm!" shouted Captain Munson, peering through the mist which the rain and wind had created.

The others turned to the leeward and saw a yacht of about the same size as the *Billow* standing straight towards them. They heard some sharp cursing on the part of Munson, and at the same time some wild screams from the other yacht attracted their attention.

By almost superhuman efforts Captain Munson handled the *Billow* so as to avoid a collision, and



the two yachts passed so close to each other that their gunwales rubbed together, and the next moment they passed each other like mad rockets and were almost instantly lost in the storm.

But as the strange yacht flew past the *Billow* Claud and the others saw several frightened looking faces on board, among which three or four ladies, and the look they gave them in that quick review spoke imploring volumes.

Captain Munson's wrath seemed to die away, and he capped it by a loud laugh.

"What is it Cap?" asked Claud.

"Did you ever see such a frightened lot?"

"They did look somewhat sorry."

"They are all green and have been caught out here, and will undoubtedly get a ducking. Stand ready to tack! Let 'em go!" he shouted, and the *Billow* rounded suddenly and stood in another direction.

"Are you sure of your bearings, Cap?"

"No, not hardly, but we will stand off and on until the weather clears a bit."

"Hark! what is that!" said Claud.

"A cry of distress," suggested Mr. Winsome.

"The yacht has capsized, I'll bet a thousand," said Munson.

"It must be. Can you get around again?" asked Claud, anxiously.

"Let me see. Stand ready there, Jack. Stand clear of the boom; now, then."

The jib fluttered for an instant, the boom swung quickly to the other side, and in a moment the staunch little *Billow* turned almost around and stood back again over the dangerous course.

In the meantime the cries of those on board the capsized yacht were heard above the roar of the storm, and each one was straining his eyesight to get a glimpse of those in distress.

At length the sounds indicated that they were close upon them.

"Let everything go, furl close," shouted Munson, and in a moment the mainsail and jib came down with a savage flutter, and was soon secured.

The storm was at its height, and nothing could exceed the dark fury of the elements on every side. Night was setting in, and blindness seemed to be upon the face of the deep.

"Here she is," shouted Claud, who stood in the bow eagerly looking forward. "Port helm."

Captain Munson obeyed silently, while the others sprang forward.

"Harder. Haul a-port," shouted Claud.

Harder still was the helm put down, and though scudding under bare poles, the yacht was going at a rapid rate.

The next instant she struck some object, and the cries of distress and despair grew frightfully louder. They had run hard against the capsized yacht, over which the waves were dashing in all their fury.

This checked the *Billow's* speed, and in an instant Claud threw a line, and called to those who were clinging to the hull.

One man, quicker of thought than his fellows, seized the rope and made it fast, which brought the *Billow* alongside.

The next moment all hands were engaged in assisting those in danger to get on board the yacht. Three ladies were among the number, and Claud was foremost in getting them into the cabin of the staunch *Billow*.

While doing so he heard his name called.

"Claud, Claud! save me."

The lady who called to him was the last one to be called off, and she was on the point of sinking. But she was rescued, and taken to the cabin with her companions.

"Thank heaven," she exclaimed, and sank exhausted upon the floor.

Quick attention and a few stimulants soon restored them all.

In the meantime the capsized yacht had been made fast. Captain Munson had hoisted sail, and was taking the yacht in tow.

"Do you know me?" asked one of the ladies, the last one rescued, who had called Claud by name.

"I seem to—who are you?" he asked.

"Mrs. Wildemere, your acquaintance at Cape May?"

"Certainly, and these—"

"Miss Tilly O'Neil and her mother."

Tilly sprang up, but failed to recognize her lover.

"Tilly, don't you know me?" asked Claud.

"Yes, your voice; but—"

"You know Billy, the Bootblack?"

"Oh, yes—yes."

"I am he," he said, taking her in his strong arms.

"You, Billy!"

"Yes, darling, the same."

Both Mrs. Wildemere and her sister Mrs. O'Neil stood by and saw the beautiful girl en-

folded in the embrace of the gallant hero who had saved their lives.

Still holding her around the waist he took by turns the proffered hands of Mrs. Wildemere and Mrs. O'Neil. Their male companions soon after came down and started at the tableau presented.

A few moments sufficed to explain the situation.

Mrs. Wildemere, after finding her sister and niece, had taken them to Cape May, and on this occasion they had accepted the invitation of an acquaintance to go out for a sail. The rest the reader already knows.

Claud and Tilly, thus strangely reunited, clung to each other as only lovers can cling, and in a few words as possible he explained the situation to her, together with the history of events which were so strikingly romantic.

The storm soon spent its fury, and passing over, left the scene as bright and clear as ever.

Captain Munson set sail for Cape May, taking the capsized yacht in tow, and in an hour or so they arrived at an anchorage and all hands were taken ashore, and up to the Stockton House.

It was now nearly a year since Claud had met Tilly O'Neil, and during this time she had changed quite as much and for the better as he had. She had grown in that short time to be a fully developed woman—bright, refined-looking and beautiful. The wayward girl had become a lovely, retiring woman.

That evening, when they sat in the parlor, and after she had improved her appearance by a change of costume, Claud was surprised at her surpassing loveliness; nor was she only improved outwardly, for education had smoothed away the rough points of her circumstantial life and left her surpassingly lovely both inwardly and outwardly.

The story of the mishaps and gallant rescue was soon spread through the hotel, and when it was found out that Claud was the same individual who performed the daring feat of saving Miss Monroe from the shark, and not only that, but capturing the dreadful monster, the enthusiasm of everybody seemed to know no bounds.

AFTER supper several of the boarders got together and arranged a reception for Claud, and a joyous evening succeeded the terrors of the afternoon. Claud and Tilly were hero and heroine of the occasion, and everybody sought to do them honor.

While the entertainment was at its height, and while Claud was standing in the center of an admiring group, a sheriff approached him.

"You are my prisoner, young man," said he.

"Me?"

"Yes, you; I have a requisition here from the Governor of New Jersey, empowering me to take you back to the city of New York."

"On what charge?" asked Captain Munson, who had crowded into the excited ring.

"He is an escaped convict," said the constable, "and here is a New York officer to take him back to Blackwell's Island."

The greatest astonishment followed this announcement and the guests gathered around in eager numbers.

Tilly O'Neil nearly fainted, but she clung to Claud's arm with faith in her heart.

"It is false," shouted Captain Munson.

"Yes, yes," echoed the crowd.

"That is nothing to me. I am simply doing my duty, and am therefore not to blame," said the sheriff.

"You shall not take him," shouted several of his admirers, gathering still more closely about, at which the New Jersey and the New York officer drew their revolvers and stood ready for any emergency.

"Hold on, my friends," said Claud, calmly.

"This is only a part of the conspiracy that has followed me for some time; I will soon prove to you all that I am not only innocent, but will also show the base tyrants and villains who are pursuing me in their true colors. Captain Munson, take the *Billow* back to New York and await orders."

"Aye, aye, sir."

"Mrs. Wildemere, and you, Tilly, I will soon communicate with you; until then, rest assured that there is a mistake, and that I will soon join you."

"But must you go?" asked Tilly, clinging to him.

"Yes, the work of my life-time is soon to commence. You are in good hands with your aunt. Do not worry about me, I shall soon be all right."

"Will you?" sneered a voice just behind him.

He turned and saw Tom Ponsby just on the point of sneaking away.

Captain Munson lighted upon him like a cat upon a rat, and in about three minutes he had received as good a drubbing as ever a fellow received in that short space of time.

All was confusion and excitement, during which the officers took Claud from the hotel and placed him on board a train bound for New York.

## CHAPTER XX.

### ONCE MORE ON BLACKWELL'S ISLAND.

IN a few hours from the time they left Cape May, Claud Barnwell, or Billy, the Bootblack, was back to his old quarters on Blackwell's Island, the place from which he had escaped a year before.

While being taken from the ferry-boat to the Penitentiary building, who should he meet but Dr. Bird, his old friend and benefactor.

"Why, Billy, is that you?" he asked.

"Yes, doctor, it is me," he replied, rather sadly.

"Why, I hoped never to see you here again."

"Well, it had to be, I suppose. Can't I see you before long, doctor?"

"Yes, almost any time."

"Well, let it be as soon as possible, for I have something of importance to attend to, and I still make bold to believe you my friend."

"Yes, Billy, I'll be your friend always."

With this they parted, and Claud was again taken to the cell from which he had escaped.

The reception he got from the officers was hearty, and it was plain to be seen that none of them cared to see him back again in the condition of a prisoner.

His changed appearance struck them all favorably, and they gathered around him to hear his romantic story.

But he kept the best part of it from them, and told only enough to explain his desire to escape, and his present altered circumstances.

That evening he had a conference with Dr. Bird, in which he told him the whole story, which of course included the life of his mother, "Barbara Wild," as she had always been known in the insane asylum, and while a patient of Dr. Bird.

The story greatly interested and surprised the noble and generous-hearted physician.

"Billy, or Claud, as I must now call you, you have a very hard task before you yet," he said.

"Not if I have a first-class lawyer," said Claud.

"Perhaps not; I am going to the city to-morrow, and I will go and see John Graham for you."

"Do so. Here, I will write a draft on my bankers for a thousand dollars, and you can give it to him as a retainer if he will take up the case."

"I will interest him in your behalf, and when once interested nothing can stand against him. Good-night, my boy, I will see that the business is attended to without loss of time."

With this they separated, and Claud lay down upon his rugged cot once more.

The sad sensation which came over him was almost overpowering, and it was not till long past midnight that he closed his eyes in sleep.

The next day he was required to turn out with the rest of the prisoners, but after breakfast he was taken to the office but assigned to no work, for the keeper became convinced that he was not only innocent, but that he would soon be taken away.

Nor was he far out of the way in his surmise, for before noon a writ of *habeas corpus* was served upon him, commanding him to produce the body of Claud Barnwell, alias Billy, the Bootblack, before one of the Supreme Court judges.

No time was lost in making a return to the writ, and that afternoon Claud was taken up to New York.

The court had adjourned before their arrival, but Lawyer Graham promised to become answerable for his production in court the next morning, and so the keeper left him and returned to the Island.

During the night Claud gave the great lawyer the story of his life, but the documents were still on board the *Billow*, and before any proceedings could be entered into, beyond asking for bail and a new trial, they must be secured.

"Captain Munson must be here by this time," said he.

"You shall go with a messenger in the morning and secure them," said the lawyer.

This being arranged, Claud slept that night much better than he had done the night before, and early in the morning he visited the Battery in the hopes of finding his yacht there.

And there she was.

Going on board he, of course, met with a hearty reception, and explained to Captain Munson and the rest how the arrest came about, and everything connected with it.

Tommy Mack had gone ashore a few moments before Claud's arrival to visit his friends, and consequently learned nothing about it.



"Have the yacht refitted and remain here until you hear from me again," said he, as he stepped ashore with his bundle of documents.

"Aye, aye, sir! you can depend on me," said Munson.

"I believe it."

"And upon me," put in Mr. Winsome.

"I believe in you both. I have got to have a hard fight, but as you cannot assist me I wish you to live at your ease. Take good care of the *Billow*, and await orders."

"We will do so, sir," they both replied.

"But cannot I be of some service to you?" asked Winsome, taking his young pupil's hand.

"Perhaps so; I will communicate with you before long."

"Do let me help you, if I can," he said, feelingly.

"You shall hear from me. Good-bye."

They all shook hands, and Claud parted with them.

The documents were placed in his lawyer's hands and read through carefully.

John Graham is a good pilot, but he says only a few words to those he has in charge.

When court opened he made an argument before the judge who had issued the writ of *habeas corpus*, and succeeded in convincing him that there had been a conspiracy against his client, and that he was not only entitled to a new trial but to be released on bail.

This being agreed to, Claud was again a free man, and the parties who had sworn against him on his trial, were summoned to make good their testimony at a future day.

Tom Ponsby was no fool. He had been a tool for pay, but he now saw that he had made several mistakes, and that the sooner he got out of the country the better.

He owned only one piece of real estate, a house on Third avenue, near Fourteenth street, the rest of his fortune had been in bonds and mortgages. But he lost no time in getting them into money and was making quick preparations to go to Europe.

He avoided Barnwell, for although he did not know to what extent he had been cheated, he knew that no great time could elapse before he would become acquainted with it all, and so he concluded it was best to be out of the way.

For a week he worked night and day to get his property into ready cash. He succeeded in doing so at some loss, and without delay engaged a passage on one of the "White Star" steamers for Europe.

Steamer day came and his baggage was all taken aboard, while he kept "shady" for fear something might happen.

Something did happen. Just as he was going on board the steamer an officer laid a heavy hand on his shoulder, and he was taken to the Tombs without form or ceremony, save that exercised by an officer, armed with the necessary authority to make arrests.

It was a thunder clap to the sneaking rascal, but there was no help for it.

William Barnwell sat in his luxuriant office, with a frown upon his face. Everything he had plotted had failed, and he was now left alone. He had heard of the wreck of the bark *Eva*. He had heard that nearly all hands were rescued; but Ponsby had not returned as he knew of, or reported to him.

While he was pondering on this subject, while he was revolving in his mind how he should yet encompass the girl whose fortune he sought, an officer stepped into his presence.

"Mr. William Barnwell?"

"Yes."

"Then you are my prisoner!"

"What?" asked the broker, starting to his feet.

"You must go with me."

"On what charge?"

"On the charge of abduction," replied the officer.

"Great God! Who makes the charge?"

"Blanch Monroe," said he, glancing at the paper.

The broker staggered to his feet for support.

"Does she still live?" he asked at length.

"I should say so—but, come; I know nothing at all about the particulars. My duty is to take you to the Tombs," said the officer.

"The Tombs!" he exclaimed, excitedly.

"Yes—come!"

"Never!"

"What?" said the officer, producing a revolver. He went.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### A FEW SURPRISES.

LAWYER GRAHAM spent much time over the documents pertaining to his youthful client,

especially the diaries of his mother's life which she had given him as he stood by her dying bed. This, together with Claud's own history, formed one of the most sensational romances that he had ever met with, notwithstanding his profession brought him continually in contact with remarkable episodes of life.

Miss Monroe had been sent for and had been made acquainted with everything connected with the case, and feeling that she owed her life to the gallant youth, she volunteered to assist him in bringing William Barnwell to justice.

But it must not be supposed, that a man of Barnwell's nature sat long in such a mesh without taking measures to free himself. No sooner did he find himself within the confines of the Tombs than he sent for his counsel and set him to work upon the case.

"Find out all about it and report at once," said he. "If it takes half I am worth I must get out of this horrible hole."

"Never fear; I'll soon prick the bubble," said his lawyer, assuringly.

The following day his lawyer had an interview with the wily Graham. He had elected to arrest and try him on a criminal process first, consequently he said nothing about anything beyond the abduction which had been entered into between Ponsby and Barnwell.

So Barnwell's lawyer laid the case before him, and he became aware for the first time that Ponsby was under arrest, and was on the point of turning State's evidence in order to save himself.

"Perdition!" exclaimed he. "He must be seen. Go to him at once; assure him that you can save him and put ten thousand dollars in his pocket if he holds his peace."

"I will do so."

"Is Miss Monroe in the city?"

"I think she is."

"Well, see to it quick, and, by hook or crook, get me out of this on *habeas corpus*."

The lawyer was silent.

"Can it be done?"

"Well, perhaps so."

"Perhaps so? Why do you falter, man? I have money—buy a judge and a few witnesses, if needs be, but for Heaven's sake be quick!"

"No buying where John Graham is against me—no, no. But, between us, I suspect there is something beyond this case," said the lawyer, thoughtfully.

"Something beyond it?"

"Yes."

"What can it be—what makes you think so?"

"Well, I have been pitted against Graham several times, and I have got so that I understand him pretty well. He looks too deep and knowing to anchor his reputation on an action of this kind. I thought I could see a triumphant twinkle in his eyes, and it did not please me."

"Nonsense; you are afraid of him."

"No, sir, not I."

"Well, at all events, associate yourself with one of the best lawyers in the State. I insist upon it."

"Very well."

"And let me hear from you right away."

"I will do so, sir."

And with this arrangement they parted.

His lawyer went first to see Ponsby, but Graham had seen him before, and without offering a bribe he had convinced him that he had nothing to hope for from Barnwell, and that his only hope lay in being the State's evidence.

So the next day it was reported to Barnwell that he could hope for nothing in that direction. The blow was perfectly stunning to him.

"There is only one chance that I see now," said Barnwell, after a moment's thought.

"And what is that?" asked his lawyer.

"See Miss Monroe and ascertain how much will induce her to abandon the suit."

"What are your relations with her?"

"Square enough; but if I had a mind to, I could ruin her reputation forever. Tell her this, and that if she forgives and withdraws the suit I will also forgive and never see or speak to or of her again in the world; but if not, well, you know."

"I haven't much faith, but I'll try it, sir."

"Confound you, man, you don't appear to have much faith in my case anyway," said he, sharply.

"Well, sir, I must be candid and tell you that your case looks bad, very bad."

"Well, what of it? It is your duty to make it look otherwise. Show this man Ponsby up, the wretch, I can give you points enough against him to send a saint to perdition. But see the girl first. Find out how she feels, and in the meantime I will fix up the evidence against this cur, Ponsby."

"All right: I'll report to you just as soon as I can have an interview with her."

"Can you find her?"

"I think so."

"She generally stops at the Fifth Avenue Hotel and you can probably find her there now."

"I'll lose no time, sir."

"All right. But remember how long the hours seem in this infernal place, and be lively."

"I will. Good-bye."

They parted, but his lawyer was doomed to disappointment in finding the plaintiff in the case, she was in careful hands.

Three days went by, and still Barnwell lay in the Tombs.

Miss Monroe could not be found, and as Ponsby refused to be bought there was no hope in the efficacy of a *habeas corpus*, and the prisoner seemed doomed to lay where he was until the trial came off, at least.

It was hard for the proud broker to bear, but there appeared to be no help for it. He sent for his wife but she would not visit him. She had long ago been informed of his doings and relations with the injured girl, and she utterly repudiated him.

It was finally understood that there was no other way than to wait until the trial came off and then depend upon impeaching Ponsby. So he made the best he could out of the situation.

At length the day of the trial arrived, and Barnwell was placed at the bar. But before the trial commenced he was served with a civil process, wherein Claud Barnwell, his son, heir to all his mother's estate and wealth, was the plaintiff.

This was a new turn for which he was not prepared. It all came up to him now. His injured and murdered wife had met with his son where he least expected it, and she had put him in possession of all the facts, as has been shown in the progress of this narrative.

But in the case on trial, it completely baffled Barnwell's lawyers, for instead of calling Ponsby, as they had expected, they suddenly and simply called Miss Monroe, and her story was given to the jury without giving them a chance to present any testimony in his behalf. Mr. Graham simply acting as assistant to the district attorney who conducted the case.

The result was that he was brought in guilty by the jury without leaving their seats, and it being understood only in Ponsby's case that he should escape provided his testimony was needed, he was then placed on trial and speedily convicted of his share in the crime, greatly to the surprise of both.

They were remanded for sentence, and the civil suit against Barnwell commenced.

Those who have followed the history of this affair from the first will readily understand all about it.

Barnwell had married Claud's mother for her fortune—had secured a large portion of it; and while this first child, Claud, was a babe, he had been taken from her and given to an old hag in the Five Points, and at her death had become a waif, while he had incarcerated his wife in the insane asylum on Blackwell's Island, and married another woman for her beauty and social position.

But now the whole case was presented to the court and the public in its true light. The documents were on hand to prove everything, and Claud, being his mother's heir, had but little trouble in establishing his claim to what there was left of her original estate.

As for Barnwell's wife, she saw her position at once, and her family took her away without entering a protest, beyond having him indicted for bigamy, which indictment was to be tried as soon as his ten years' sentence for abduction was served out, and so there was no opposition whatever to Claud's suit.

William Barnwell made a hard fight until the woman he had married under false pretenses turned against him, and then his courage failed and he submitted to the inevitable.

As before stated, he was sentenced to ten years in Sing Sing for the abduction of Miss Monroe, and Ponsby to eight for his part in the affair.

Ponsby served out his time, and is now a "fence" in the Seventh Ward of New York, being a friend to thieves and buying their stolen goods; but he is under surveillance of the police, and is in a fair way to spend the remainder of his days where he spent that eight years.

But William Barnwell's pride was more than Ponsby's, and before he had been in prison a month he was found dead in his cell one morning, having committed suicide, and in a letter to his lawyer he confessed the whole crime.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### GATHERING TOGETHER THE SCATTERED THREADS.

THE *Billow* was once more plowing the ruffled tide, and her gallant commander, now recognized as one of the most neat and elegant youths in the country, was again on her deck, happy and free.



During the next season the *Billow* was entered in an ocean race with several larger yachts, and still, under the guiding hand of Captain Munson, she came out victorious, and was awarded the prize.

It was just after this race that a brilliant company of yachtsmen and sporting gentlemen were congregated at the Stockton House, Cape May, where the larger portion of the contesting yachts lay at anchor.

There were several English and French gentlemen, and not a few noblemen in the company, but the history of the *Billow*, together with the fame and the romance surrounding the owner, gave both yacht and her commander the precedence, and Claud Barnwell was the center of all interest.

The story of the shark, the account of the vessel at St. Augustine, together with the later one at Cape May, were in every one's mouth, and all vied with each other in doing honor to the brave youth who stood in their midst.

Tilly O'Neal, in company with her aunt and mother, was soon expected back from a visit to England and the continent, and it was understood that they were to meet Claud at Cape May, where something of importance to them both was to transpire.

While the reception (for such it seemed to be in Claud's honor) was at its height, a lady leaning on the arm of a handsome man, approached him.

"Mr. Barnwell," she said, touching him on the arm with her fan.

Claud turned quickly around.

"Miss Monroe!" he exclaimed, extending both his hands in his own hearty way.

"It is indeed I," she said, quite as heartily.

"Where have you been these long months?" he asked.

"Oh, traveling a little. Allow me to introduce you to my future husband, Lord Cromwell," she said, presenting her escort. "Leon, know the youth who twice saved my life, Claud Barnwell."

The two gentlemen shook hands.

"And that alone shall make us twice as good friends," replied the nobleman, earnestly. "I have heard of you before, and I consider myself honored by this acquaintance."

Lord Cromwell was a middle-aged gentleman, a fine specimen of the more solid English aristocracy, men of brains and muscle as well as titles, and from the first he took to Claud as one brave man always takes to another.

"Lord Cromwell has been a sailor in his time," suggested Miss Monroe, "and I doubt not but that your tastes will harmonize quite as well in that line as your ideas are sure to in other things."

"Indeed! But in any case I am happy to know the friend of Miss Monroe, and I trust we may yet know each other better," said Claud.

"I trust so, too," said she.

"Oh, I know we shall. Leave us alone for that," said the Englishman. "Shall I meet you by and by somewhere?"

"With pleasure. In the billiard-room; say at twelve o'clock."

"Thanks. I will meet you there."

There were others who desired to be presented to our hero, and so the nobleman and his lady were soon crowded aside, and the reception went on.

But at twelve they met, as per appointment, in the billiard-room, and the acquaintance continued in the most agreeable way.

Lord Cromwell, who had become familiar with Claud's history, felt like showing him that he, too, had roughed it before reaching the high, gilded round on his social ladder, and so he told him of his history, how he had been a younger son of an English nobleman—one of those persons who inherit nothing from their fathers—and after leaving school had taken to the sea, and for several years had been only a common sailor until death had placed him at the head of his family.

"My lord, I congratulate you," said Claud.

"Be good enough, Mr. Barnwell, not to call me 'my lord,' I hate it—especially from such brave and jolly fellows as you are—call me Jack—anything when we are together, and leave the title to boobies and ladies."

"All right, that suits me; but, by the way, what ship did you sail in?"

"The good English ship *Rover*."

"What, the *Rover*?"

"The same."

"And did you ever come to New York?"

"Several times; oh, yes, had lots of fun in New York when I was a jolly jack on board the *Rover*. A funny thing happened to me once, there in New York," said he, as they sat down to a table to partake of refreshments.

"Indeed? What is it like, pray?"

"Like! Ha, ha, ha! It was like getting stripped."

"Stripped? Tell me about it," said Claud, while an earnest smile mantled his features.

"Well, it's devilish funny, but this is how it was. You see, I had been ashore and got pretty mellow, in fact, got more aboard than I could carry. So I lay down on the Battery park to sleep it off. Well, how long I slept I don't know, but when I awoke it was broad daylight, and I was stripped to the hide."

The narrator laughed, but Claud blushed.

"And that was not the fun of it, though. The chap who had taken my clothes left me a prison rig."

"Indeed—a prison rig?"

"Yes, the entire outfit."

"Well, that is curious. You must have felt foolish."

"Oh, yes, but I should have looked upon it as a first-rate joke, had he not taken a few mementoes which I valued very highly."

"Would you forgive the exchange if you could get back these mementoes?" asked Claud, earnestly.

"Indeed I would, and gladly, too."

"Now let me tell you the story of a young man, together with his escape from prison, and perhaps we can get nearer to your treasures."

Hereupon Claud went over the earlier part of his life history, all of which the reader is by this time familiar with, ending it up with a description of his escape from Blackwell's Island, and the exchange of clothes on the Battery park.

"That must be the very chap. Can you find him?"

"I can," said Claud.

"Where?"

"Here!"

"What—you?"

"Yes, me; I exchanged clothing with you, and I have your mementoes still preserved."

The brave Englishman grasped Claud by the hand and the two swore eternal friendship then and there.

"Come on board my yacht to-morrow and I will restore them to you, together with the identical clothes which I took away."

A week from that time Tilly O'Neal, in company with her mother and Mrs. Wildemere, arrived at Cape May. She had greatly improved during the few months she had been gone, and a more admired beauty never graced that delightful and select watering-place.

A wedding at Cape May is a decided rarity, and a double one a nine-day wonder. But there was a double one there within a week, Lord Cromwell having decided to celebrate his nuptials there at the same time, and one of the greatest and brightest events in the history of Cape May transpired on that occasion.

There is no occasion to continue our story further.

All hands are happy, wealth and admiration abound, and two more devoted or contented people cannot be found on Murray Hill to-day than Claud Barnwell and the beautiful woman who was once Tilly O'Neal.

The *Billow* is still afloat, and every summer they spend several weeks on her, either in racing in the regular regattas, or cruising up and down the coast wherever their good wills suggest.

But neither of them ever forgot the trials of the past; Tilly remembers when she was a news girl on the corner of Beekman and Nassau streets, and Claud remembers his boyhood's friends when he was *Billy the Bootblack*, as he also remembers when and by what means he played the *trump card last*.

[THE END.]

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